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Winter 1985

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Special Election Issue

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*William A. Galston on the Future
of the Democratic Party*

Steven J. Rosenstone on Why Reagan Won

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Plus:

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1984: The Year the Republicans Became the Majority Party

George Bush

WHAT DID Republicans achieve in the election of 1984? Why did they achieve it? And what does it signify?

A little over ten years ago I served as chairman of the Republican National Committee. The fates had dealt cruelly with the GOP. In 1974, in the wake of Watergate, the party was in desperate shape; the Republicans had suffered a net loss in the Senate and House of 52 seats. Of the 35 governorships being contended for that year, Republicans had lost 28 of them—80 percent.

From the perspective of that experience, I confess to being pleased by 1984. I feel the happiness of one who has discovered that the reports of his demise were premature. I acknowledge that my genuine pleasure over the events of 1984 may color my analysis of what happened. In defense, I can only say that the picture I sketch results from having spent a great deal of 1984 on the road, trying to gauge the mood of America with much the same curiosity felt by Gallup, Harris, and Roper.

The Achievement

What did the Republican party achieve?

A Republican president won every state except Minnesota—and he lost that by less than 4,000 votes. If a 20 percent margin is a landslide, he won 32 of the 50 states by a landslide.

Republicans retained a majority in the Senate and closed the Democratic margin in the House by more than a dozen seats in a year in which there were very few “open” seats.

Republicans picked up over 600 seats in the state legislatures and won eight of 13 gubernatorial races.

For the first time in 30 years, virtually the same number of citizens voted Republican in the congressional races as voted Democratic, despite the advantages of incumbency with which the Democrats obviously began. The Republican congressional vote reflects, more clearly than any other fact, the depth of Republican political strength. You will recall that in both the landslide reelections of Eisenhower (1956) and Nixon (1972), the Democratic party won the cumulative vote for Congress.

Finally, the Republican party's own polls now show that Republicans outnumber Democrats. (The CBS News/*New York Times* poll corroborates our figures; its November post-election survey had Republicans and Republican-leaning independents ahead of Democrats and Democrat-leaning independents, 47 to 44 percent.) Moreover, the Republican margin appears likely to grow in view of the Republican leanings among young Americans who will become new voters in the next four years. (In that regard, one striking

George Bush is the vice president of the United States. He previously served as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, chief of the U.S. Liaison Office in the People's Republic of China, chairman of the Republican National Committee, ambassador to the United Nations, and member of Congress.

"A Republican president won every state except Minnesota—and he lost that by less than 4,000 votes. If a 20 percent margin is a landslide, he won 32 of the 50 states by a landslide."

finding of our polls is that among the 18-to-24 year olds who committed to a party within the last few years, two out of three identified as Republicans.)

I know there is controversy about the durability of the current Republican majority. Some scholars, I take it, insist that in their hearts most Americans remain emotionally identified with the Democratic party, while other scholars say that party affiliation is no longer salient, that America has moved away from partisanship, and that the electorate is becoming increasingly independent, prone to judge candidates on grounds other than party affiliation.

I disagree. I believe the Republican party is already the majority party of the United States, and that that fact will become increasingly evident in the foreseeable future.

The Explanation of the Achievement

If there has been a realignment, what brought it about? There are, I think, three main reasons for the shift that has taken place.

Organization

The first explanation is easy. The Republican party national organization went to school in the last decade and mastered the nuts and bolts of winning political campaigns. As a result, in 1984 Republicans simply out-organized, outworked, and outmaneuvered the Democrats. Our base of reliable financial support was twice as broad as the Democrats', thanks to a decade-long effort to reach out to the average people—to the men and women with modest means, but with strong feelings about their country.

Organizational advantages are, of course, fleeting. I recognize the fact that the Democratic party will learn from its errors, will take lessons from the GOP, and will soon draw even organizationally.

Still, to explain where the Republicans got in 1984, it

would be misleading not to acknowledge the importance of politics—"the long, slow boring of hard boards," to use the words of the astute Max Weber—to political outcomes.

The President

The second reason for the realignment in our electorate was Ronald Reagan. The American people deeply respect him and believe in his basic decency and his vision of the nation's future.

I often find myself speculating on why the media and the scholarly community tend to underestimate him and past presidents like him—Eisenhower, Truman, and Lincoln, to name three—whose detractors in their times were many and prominent, but are now forgotten and unlamented. Conversely, I wonder why writers on contemporary politics are often attracted to the glib and the flashy—the 90-day wonders of political life, whose actions never measure up to their claims.

In these speculations, I borrow some wisdom from Anne Bradstreet, the 17th century poet from colonial Massachusetts, who wrote:

A ship that bears much sail, and little or no ballast, is easily upset; and that man whose head hath great abilities, and his heart little or no grace, is in danger of foundering.

Some reporters and commentators, it seems to me, pay too much heed to the superficialities of life; a big sail dazzles them. Too often they fail to look below decks and gauge the human heart and the virtues stowed away there—moral courage and human understanding, qualities President Reagan displays in everything he does.

President Reagan understands the essentials of leadership of a free nation: the capacity to shape a people's purpose and the courage to be guided by it. By acting on that understanding, President Reagan has been an effective president. His success, in turn, has put to rout

false fears that the presidency was too big a job for any one person and that our constitutional system of separated powers was in need of radical surgery.

Basic Principles

There was a third reason why Republicans became the majority party: fundamental ideas. Those who represented the Republican party understood the basic values and precepts of our nation's traditions, and we expressed them powerfully.

Let me address two of those fundamental ideas: freedom and democracy. Some might say these are old ideas. But the president and Republicans everywhere talked about them with an incisiveness and originality that made them as fresh as a spring meadow.

The Moral Effects of Freedom. Ten years ago, Americans discussed freedom—and particularly economic freedom—apologetically. The conventional wisdom was that freedom and selfishness were virtually synonymous; that profits came at the expense of others; that the marketplace bred greed; and that the only virtue of free enterprise was its efficiency in maintaining our high standard of living. Economic freedom, the argument ran, produced good things, but bad people.

How wrong that notion was! In fact, the most beneficial product of economic freedom is the set of moral values it promotes.

When I refer to moral values, I am not thinking of the individual vigor that freedom galvanizes, although human vitality is not to be undervalued. The prodigious energies of Americans have been the constant subject of admiration by every foreign visitor, from Tocqueville to Tanaka, from Jane Croly to Zhao Zhiang.

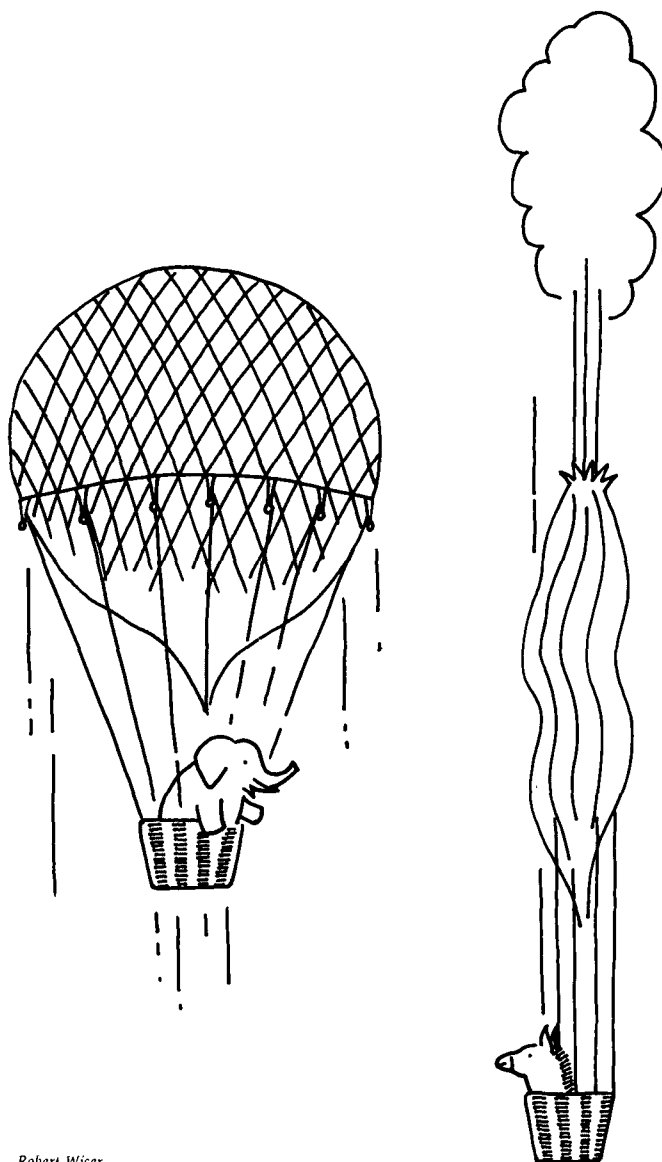
But economic freedom does something far more subtle. It improves our habits of living together. It makes us better neighbors of one another. Free people, acting daily in a free marketplace, learn empathy. We get used to looking at things from another's point of view. Economic freedom makes it in our self-interest to see the world as others see it and help them do what *they* want.

Think of it: A free person profits by inventing something and teaching others to use it to their profit. Henry Kaiser's cement trucks in the Far West bear the motto: "Find a need and fill it." If we were less modest, we would recognize that impulse for what it is: neighborliness, community, the habits of human fellowship.

That brilliant Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville observed a century and a half ago that Americans "maintain that virtue is useful and prove it everyday." If we fail to see how economic freedom shapes us to be virtuous—to be trusting and helpful and responsive to others—we foolishly underestimate the real importance of economic freedom.

It is no accident that volunteerism flourishes where free enterprise thrives. It is no coincidence that Americans in the last two months have privately given over \$40 million for Ethiopian relief. It is no fluke that in one weekend the United Negro College Fund raised \$10 million in voluntary donations from its public appeal.

The experience of using initiative to meet the needs



Robert Wisner

"The Republican party national organization went to school in the last decade and mastered the nuts and bolts of winning political campaigns. As a result, in 1984 Republicans simply out-organized, outworked, and outmaneuvered the Democrats."

of others—and that's what free enterprise is about—breeds moral imagination. It stirs us to want to make the lives of others better.

I am not one who believes that private enterprise can do all that is necessary to make ours a just and secure society. Quite the contrary. Government has an important part to play in a free country, and for those functions it is necessary for, I care deeply that government be competent.

But government does not produce feeling for others, and every time it supplants free, private activity, we erode this subtle capacity to generate neighborliness in our society.

The Intellectual Effects of Democracy. Republican success in 1984 was based on a second fundamental belief: democracy. Again, think back to ten years ago. The U.S. electoral process was condemned on a host of grounds: The "best" candidates were not running; money corrupted the process; deceptive advertising deluded the average voter; and the needy had no voice. And, according to the pessimistic, democracy was not working well in other countries. In nations lacking literacy and abundance, democracy seemed inept and fragile—which meant it was useless to the majority of countries in the world. For developing nations, the cynics and the fearful were sure that authoritarianism and even totalitarianism were the right medicines.

But today democracy appears to have worked far better than the doomsayers predicted. Our elected leaders at every level of government are addressing tough problems and doing so with a genuine sensitivity to the diverse concerns of all the people.

Abroad we find democracy being restored where it had once been given up. In Latin America alone, in the last four years democratic governments have replaced dictatorships in Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, and Grenada. Brazil just elected a new civilian president.

And we find once-shaky democratic regimes growing

increasingly stable, even amidst wrenching ethnic tensions.

The secret of democracy's staying power is that it educates people about one another. Candidates in democracies are compelled to seek popular support—and in doing so, amidst political competition, they disclose details of the public business. At the same time, voters are seriously canvassed for their views. This seemingly endless give-and-take between voters and candidates creates in democratic nations what nondemocratic systems have never been able to produce: an informed and involved citizenry.

The virtue of a democracy—the reason why it succeeds and is necessary—is that it generates the best information about our society, tapping knowledge from the most diverse sources and putting it to work in the solution of our problems.

And the more democracy, the more informed our people. That is why our federalist system of many governments is so important. We have in place state and local democracies. Our urgent task is to be vigilant to assure that they work fairly; that every citizen—white and black, rich and poor—can vote; and that any political party can compete. Then, we need to give the localities challenging and responsible tasks to do. As grassroot democracies solve their own problems, the citizenry becomes more informed and engaged.

Democracy is vital to developing nations as well, for, imperfect as it may be in countries unused to it, democracy brings to light the very knowledge necessary to enable those nations to escape illiteracy, prejudice, and poverty. That is why we must never wash our hands of other nations as their people grope toward democracy.

In contrast, the central reality of a nondemocratic society is its ignorance. Recently, I was reading Alexander Sakharov's letter to Dr. Sidney Drell. At the end of the letter Sakharov explained why it was false for Americans to hope that Russian public opinion could ever cause the Soviet government to behave more sensibly and, for example, pull the Soviet armies out of Afghanistan. "We [Russians]," he wrote, "don't even know how, or by whom, the decision to invade Afghanistan was made! People in our country do not have even a fraction of the information about events in the world and in their own country which the citizens of the West have at their disposal."

Democracy and economic freedom are not luxuries for a lucky few nations. They are the secrets of an abundant and knowledgeable and peaceful world. And the suppression of them leads mankind to a baleful and ignorant existence, plagued by dearth, distrust, and danger.

In the last ten years, Americans have regained their appreciation of the fact that economic freedom and democracy are priceless moral treasures; that their logic and structure improve our natures, not debase them; and that we must stop pitying ourselves for being less than God and begin crediting ourselves for transcending our narrow self-interests.

We Republicans happened to be the instrument of that renewal of confidence, and the electorate expressed its gratitude to the GOP in a genuine, old-fashioned way—by joining it.

"We Republicans happened to be the instrument of that renewal of confidence, and the electorate expressed its gratitude to the GOP in a genuine, old-fashioned way—by joining it."

"Because the state legislatures control not only their own reapportionment, but also the redistricting of the Congress, they determine whether Republican electoral strength will be fairly translated into the power to govern."

The Significance of the Achievement

What does the electoral realignment mean for the Republican party?

The Republican national party must continue what it began in 1984—putting its resources to work to win at the state level, in the state legislatures. It needs to do so for three reasons.

The first is political. Because the state legislatures control not only their own reapportionment, but also the redistricting of the Congress, they determine whether Republican electoral strength will be fairly translated into the power to govern. It is crucial for the Republican party to keep the Democrats from abusing the power of reapportionment, and the only sure way to achieve that is to win state legislative majorities.

The second reason is to sustain the vigor of the party. State governments are the breeding ground for future national leaders; recruiting good Republicans and providing them experience in governing at the state level are the best assurances that the party will stay strong at the national level.

The third reason is one of policy. The decentralization of domestic policy-making is a central tenet of Republicanism. As significant policy-making power is returned to the grassroots, it becomes ever more imperative that state governments enhance their ability to perform capably and fairly.

The South

The South is a region of particular importance to the Republican party. Historically, one reason why Americans have permitted so many governmental responsibilities to flow to Washington was the malfunctioning of Southern politics. As V. O. Key documented so powerfully in his classic *Southern Politics*, blacks and poor whites were effectively voiceless in the South. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, just recently renewed for an-

other 15 years, has done much to enlarge popular participation throughout the region.

The Republican party, literally nonexistent there in 1965, has been the principal political beneficiary of the Voting Rights Act. Today two-party competition is alive at the national level in almost every part of the South. Republicans hold ten of the region's 22 Senate seats and 42 of its 166 House seats.

But Democrats still dominate southern state legislatures. My home state, Texas, however, shows what can happen when the national Republican party invests its resources into state races. This year Republicans gained 17 legislative seats in Texas. Moreover, in North Carolina, another Southern state where the party made a strong state effort, the gain was 25 legislative seats.

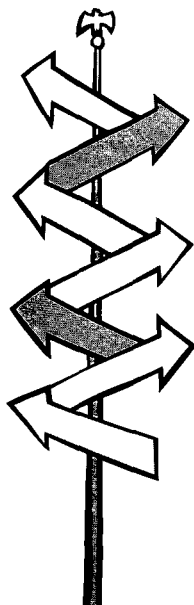
Freedom and Equality

A final word. American political life is dominated by the tension between fundamental values: freedom and equality. At times in our nation's history, these two goals have appeared opposed to one another. The more we had of one, the less it seemed we could attain of the other.

But the real lesson of our past is that liberty and equality are inseparable. The Great Depression showed us that justice was necessary to freedom, that our free society could not endure if our citizenry—through misfortunes beyond their control—ever sank into despair.

But history also teaches us that freedom is the secret of equalizing men's chances to live with dignity. A wise man once said to me, "More has been done for equality in the name of liberty than in the name of equality," by which he meant: If we educate our citizenry and let them do what they think is right, more people will escape poverty than if we surrender our social responsibilities to government.

I believe he is right. I think that the 1984 election signifies that most Americans believe he is right as well.



The 1984 Election: How Much Realignment?

James L. Sundquist

IF EVERYTHING turns out right," President Reagan said a week before the election, 1984 could mark "the beginnings of a new phenomenon observers have been noticing — an historic electoral realignment." Whether the president now thinks that everything indeed turned out right has not been reported. But other Republicans have not been reticent. "We are in the midst of a major political realignment in this country," claimed Robert M. Teeter, the respected Republican pollster, two weeks after the election. Gordon Black, another poll taker, called 1984 a "realigning election . . . the most important and fundamental election since 1936." That was the year that the Democratic party, with Franklin Roosevelt's second landslide victory, entrenched itself as the country's majority party, supplanting a Republican party that had held a solid majority status for the preceding four decades.

But others were not so sure that the second Ronald Reagan landslide presaged a shift of such historic proportions. To many, it looked more like two other great Republican reelection triumphs — those of Dwight Eisenhower in 1956 and Richard Nixon in 1972, the latter won by an even larger proportion of the vote than Reagan's. In both instances, those turned out to be personal victories of popular presidents, with no significant lasting impact on the party system. Those elections did not upset the Democrats' comfortable majority position, as measured by their preponderance in the Congress, governorships, city halls, and state legislatures — and in both cases the Democrats came back to win the next presidential election as well, with John F. Kennedy in 1960 and Jimmy Carter in 1976.

Once again, in 1984, the landslide Republican triumph in the presidential race did not extend to a *party* sweep in the contests for other offices. The Democrats actually posted a net gain of two seats in the Senate, and they lost only 15 or 16 in the House (depending on a recount in Indiana), one governorship, and five of the nation's 99 legislative houses. These modest setbacks were not enough to wipe out their gains in the midterm election of 1982. At this time, then, after four years of the Reagan administration, the Republicans are actually weaker by a couple of seats in the Senate, a dozen in the House, and half a dozen governorships than they were when President Reagan was first inaugurated.

This tally contrasts dramatically with the aftermath of the truly historic 1936 election. That was a Democratic party sweep from the top to the bottom of the ticket. The Democrats gained six seats in the Senate that year, bringing their total to 75 — 16 more than four years earlier. They picked up another 11 in the House, bringing them to a level 20 seats higher than four years before. The Republicans were reduced after the 1936 election to a bare

James L. Sundquist is a senior fellow in the Governmental Studies program at Brookings and the author of six Brookings books, including Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States. He and Thomas E. Cavanaugh have contributed a chapter on the 1984 election to a symposium volume, tentatively entitled The New Direction in American Politics, to be published by Brookings later this year.

20 percent of the House, with only 89 members, and they held just eight of the 48 state governorships.

It was clear in 1936 that millions of voters who had simply cast a protest vote against Herbert Hoover four years earlier had sometime during Roosevelt's first term become Democrats, and new voters were identifying preponderantly with the new majority party. But the millions of voters who cast an anti-Jimmy Carter protest vote in 1980 have not become Republicans on any such scale — yet. As of 1985, they are like church members who on a couple of Sundays have gone across the street to another church — or nonchurchgoers who have attended a couple of services — because they liked the pastor, or the sermon, or the music. But most of them have not stayed to be baptized.

Nevertheless, some have. The real question to be asked about the 1984 election is not, was there a realignment? It is, how much realignment is going on, in what direction, and for what reasons? In any given year, some people are shifting party loyalties. The configuration of the party system is in constant flux. At some times, as in the 1930s, the changes are so massive that the party system can truly be said to have been transformed. At other times, the system is more stable. But much of the confusion surrounding public discussion of party realignment after every election grows out of the tendency to ask about the phenomenon as though it were a yes-or-no proposition rather than a matter of degree.

What, then, is the degree of realignment in 1984? Analysis of some of the public opinion poll data that is now becoming available leads to this general conclusion: much less than in 1936, but more than at any other time in the half century since then. The Reagan Revolution does not match the Roosevelt Revolution in its impact on the party system, but it has brought about the greatest transformation in five decades — and the realigning forces are still at work.

Measuring the Realignment

One can never know for sure that a realignment has been taking place until after it has happened, because the defining characteristic of realignment is durability. Are the new Republicans merely visitors in the GOP church, or will they join the congregation? We will not know whether they have stayed until after they have done so.

Looking back over a century and a half of party history, we know that major realignments took place in the 1830s, when the new Whig party reestablished two-party competition with the Jacksonian Democrats; in the 1860s, when the Whig party died and the Republican party was born out of the conflict over slavery; in the 1890s, when the Democrats went populist and the Republicans gained a permanent increment of strength, making them a clear majority; and in the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the Democrats ousted the GOP from its majority position. But no one could have said for sure, in the midst of those realignment eras, whether the shifts in party allegiance would be durable.

Analysts today, however, have a stronger data base for the early detection and measurement of realign-

“The Reagan Revolution does not match the Roosevelt Revolution in its impact on the party system, but it has brought about the greatest transformation in five decades. . . .”

ments. In addition to election returns, two sets of figures are now available that come closer to measuring durable party attachment. One consists of data on registration of voters by parties, a practice not introduced until this century. The other is made up of voters' responses when public opinion polls ask them to name the party with which they identify. In both cases, the voter is asked to make a positive declaration — “I am a Republican” or “I am a Democrat” — which is quite different from saying, “I voted Republican” or “I voted Democratic” this year.

From the late 1940s until the summer of 1984, the public opinion polls had shown a consistent and substantial Democratic advantage over the Republicans, usually in a ratio of about three to two. (The proportion of independents stood at 20 to 25 percent of the electorate until the mid-1960s, when it began a steady climb to more than 30 percent.) During the 1984 election period, the Democratic margin eroded, significantly more than in any other postwar campaign. By election time, a few of the polls showed the GOP drawing even with the Democrats for the first time since 1946. Most, however, still indicated a plurality — though a sharply reduced one — for the Democrats.

The accompanying tables, drawn from two sets of polling data now available, break down the GOP gains by demographic groups. Table 1, which compares the 1980 and 1984 CBS News/*New York Times* (CBS/NYT) election-day surveys of voters leaving their polling places, shows a 12 percentage point reduction in the Democratic margin among all voters, explained wholly by the movement of whites (plus a small number of Hispanics, which the poll tabulates separately); the Democrats actually increased their already-large plurality among blacks. Similarly, Table 2, which compares the final pre-election Gallup poll of 1984 with that of 1980, reveals a decline in the Democratic plurality of 14 percentage points, made up of losses in both racial groups, but with the larger percentage decline occurring among whites. (Because whites make up 88 to 89 per-

Table 1.
Changes in Party Identification,
by Race and by White
Demographic Groups, 1980-84
(percent of respondents)

	1980		1984		Change in Dem. Plurality
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	
<i>All voters</i>	45	30	38	35	-12
Whites	42	32	34	39	-15
Blacks	73	10	77	7	+7
Hispanics	67	15	56	27	-23
<i>White subgroups</i>					
Men	39	33	32	38	-12
Women	44	31	36	39	-16
Age 18-29	40	30	30	42	-22
Age 30-44	38	30	33	35	-10
Age 45-59	44	32	34	37	-15
Age 60 and over	45	37	38	42	-12
Northeast	41	30	36	33	-8
Midwest	38	33	32	41	-14
South	46	30	33	39	-22
West	41	36	34	44	-15
Prof./mgr.	36	34	31	40	-11
Other white					
collar	41	32	34	36	-11
Blue collar	48	25	38	30	-15
Agricultural	41	38	35	49	-17
Unemployed	37	37	42	26	+16
Union					
household	50	24	46	26	-6
Less than high					
school	52	29	47	35	-11
High school					
graduate	47	29	37	37	-18
Some college	37	33	30	41	-15
College graduate	35	34	31	39	-9
Protestant	35	41	28	47	-13
Catholic	48	23	43	28	-10
Jewish	63	15	61	15	-2
Born-again					
Christians	40	37	29	45	-19
Large city	49	26	46	28	-5
Small city	43	27	35	37	-18
Suburban	37	35	33	41	-10
Rural	42	34	32	40	-16

Note: For simplicity, a column giving the proportion of respondents who identified themselves as independents is omitted. It can be computed by subtracting the total of Democrats and Republicans from 100.

Source: CBS News/*New York Times* election day surveys of voters.

cent of the sample, they account for 97 percent of the Democratic loss shown in the Gallup data.)

Neither polling organization found any significant Republican gains during Reagan's first term until the 1984 general election campaign began. Throughout the primary and pre-convention season, in the Gallup poll the Democrats maintained the three-to-two advantage over the Republicans that they had enjoyed for nearly 40 years, and the CBS/NYT survey found that margin continuing even into September. If voters had been receptive to the idea of becoming Republicans earlier in President Reagan's first term, they did not actually cross the threshold until the 1984 campaign heightened their political awareness and interest. (The two tables are not strictly comparable, because the Gallup poll sampled the entire 18-and-over population, including the 47 percent who did not vote in November, while the CBS/NYT survey interviewed actual voters as they left the polls.)

The Republican increase shown in the tables should perhaps be discounted a bit, at least tentatively, because survey data on party identification sometimes show a temporary bias in favor of a winning candidate's party during the presidential election season. During the Eisenhower reelection year of 1956, for instance, Gallup showed a 4 percent gain for the Republicans and a somewhat larger loss for the Democrats — a surge that disappeared within a year or two as the proportions reverted to their pre-1956 levels. In 1964, the year of the Lyndon Johnson Democratic landslide, the same poll showed a pull toward the Democrats and away from the Republicans of about the same magnitude, and again the shift vanished within two years. The 1984 Republican gains are on the same scale as these earlier movements, which means that they too might not turn out to be lasting. But that would appear to depend on Reagan's success in his second term, for the setbacks of the winning party after 1956 and 1964 can be explained by, in the first case, a severe recession and, in the second, Vietnam and a combination of other adverse events that were visited on Lyndon Johnson.

Voter registration data confirm the pro-Republican trend, although they are of little use in gauging its magnitude. Relatively few people have gone to their courthouses to change registration from one party to the other — as many did in the New Deal era — but new voters, most of them young, appear to have given the Republicans the edge. Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, found the GOP outregistering the Democrats in ten states, compared to four with a better Democratic showing. A *Washington Post* survey gave the Republicans the lead in new registrations in nine states and the Democrats five, with three even.

The GOP Southern Tide

Whatever the number of new Republicans turns out to be — and each percentage point represents 1.7 million eligible voters — the largest share of them will be in the South. Table 2 indicates that fully half of the Republican gain among white voters, as measured by party plurality, is in the South, with virtually no change

in the West. The CBS/NYT data in Table 1 indicate a more nearly uniform shift, but the South still stands out as the banner region for the GOP.

The election returns confirm a Republican *party* tide there, as distinct from an electoral swing to the president alone. Half of the party's gains in the House of Representatives came in the South; it captured four Democratic seats in Texas, three in North Carolina, and one in Georgia, while losing one in Arkansas. It picked up one governorship, in North Carolina, and returned every one of its four incumbent senators seeking reelection — in the erstwhile unshakably Democratic states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Mississippi — while holding the seat of retiring Republican John Tower in Texas. The GOP defeated an incumbent Democrat in a border state, Kentucky, while losing the seat held by retiring Senator Howard Baker in neighboring Tennessee. In some states, at least, the Republican surge extended to lesser offices. In Texas, Republicans increased their share of the 150-member state house of representatives from 37 to 53 seats (an all-time high) and gained more than a hundred county offices. In a post-election statewide poll, 49 percent of respondents identified themselves as Republicans or Republican-leaning independents, compared to only 33 percent on the Democratic side. If that poll is accurate, Texas alone could account for more than a million new Republicans. In North Carolina, the GOP gained 25 state legislative seats.

That the Republican party should be rising spectacularly in the South should not surprise anyone. The wonder is that its ascent has been delayed so long. When, during the economic crisis of the 1930s, those who demanded a vigorous, interventionist government remade the Democratic party into their instrument of activism, conservatives no longer had a congenial home in it. Liberals, similarly, could no longer be comfortable in a Republican party dug in to defend the status quo. But, as observed earlier, changing party loyalties is like changing churches; people do not do it easily. Some liberals moved at once from the Republican to the Democratic party, and a smaller number of conservatives switched in the other direction, but it took a generation in the North for the party system to become generally realigned along ideological lines. In the South, the movement of conservatives to the Republican party was even slower. The region remained the Solid South for nearly two decades before the first stirrings of realignment could be sensed.

But two events in the early postwar period shattered the South's solidity. One was the embrace by the Democratic party of the cause of civil rights; the other was the nomination by the Republicans of Dwight Eisenhower, a war hero and native Texan. The one cost the Democratic party its standing as the defender of southern traditions; the other made the GOP, stigmatized for nearly a century as the party of the Carpetbaggers, respectable at last. In the Eisenhower era, metropolitan areas in the Rim South, with their cosmopolitan populations, realigned on the national pattern, as conservatives abandoned the Democracy for keeps. But in the Deep South and in most rural areas throughout the region, white voters found themselves adrift. They were

Table 2.
Changes in Party Identification,
by Race and by White
Demographic Groups, 1980-1984
(percent of respondents)

	1980		1984		Change in Dem. Plurality
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	
<i>All voters</i>	47	27	41	35	-14
Whites	42	29	35	39	-17
Blacks	84	4	82	6	-4
<i>White subgroups</i>					
Men	39	27	31	39	-20
Women	42	29	37	36	-12
Age 18-29	39	22	30	39	-26
Age 30-49	37	29	33	37	-12
Age 50 and over	46	32	39	38	-13
Northeast	46	24	41	36	-17
Midwest	33	30	29	39	-13
South	48	25	31	40	-32
West	38	36	38	35	-1
Less than high school	51	22	40	37	-26
High school graduate	41	29	35	36	-13
College	33	33	31	39	-8
Union house- hold	48	20	45	26	-9

Source: American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) final pre-election surveys of adult population.

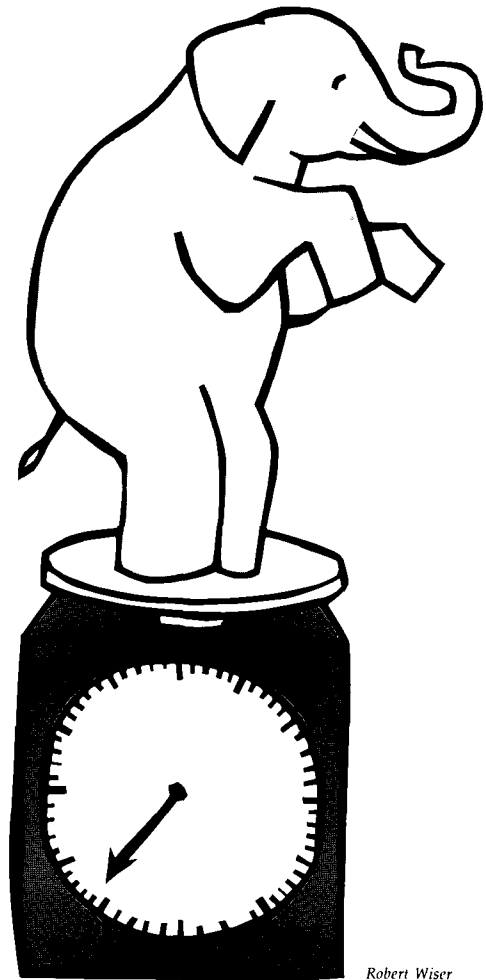
severed from the national Democratic party, but they were not yet ready to embrace a Republican party whose president had sent troops to enforce school desegregation in Little Rock. Eventually, however, the Republican leadership passed from Eisenhower to a man who sent southerners a message that he was on their side: Barry Goldwater. As one of the few non-southern senators who had voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he was the first Republican nominee whom segregationist southerners really saw as a kindred spirit — and he turned the political map upside down. He lost ignominiously in the North, but five of the six states he carried were in the Deep South. And zealous new Republican organizations came into being throughout the region.

The Watergate scandal set back the Republicans everywhere, including the South, and their revival in that region was stalled further when the Democrats chose a native son, Jimmy Carter, as their leader. But the achievement of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and afterward was to pick up where Goldwater had left off and send

the South an even clearer signal: Not just the presidential candidate as an individual, but the Republican party as an institution, could be counted on to be sympathetic to the traditional southern views on social questions. Reagan switched the Justice Department stance on busing for school desegregation from support to opposition, and he cast the weight of the government on the side of private schools — which in the South means the “segregation academies” set up for those who found the desegregated public schools intolerable. Moreover, he arrayed the GOP with southern conservatism on some potent new issues thrust into the political arena by court decisions: school prayer, abortion, and the teaching of evolution in public schools. In so doing, he mobilized millions of Christian fundamentalists, led by their pastors, as a virtual adjunct of the Republican party in his campaign for reelection. He was on the side of patriotism, too, backing an historic buildup of the national defense and favoring an unrelenting confrontation with the Soviet Union. Through all these appeals, by 1984 he had gone far towards recasting the GOP as the white man’s party in the South. He received 70 to 75 percent of the white vote in the Deep South and up to 80 percent of the white male vote. Democratic Governor Charles Robb of Virginia said that it had become “socially unacceptable” in the South for a white man to be a Democrat.

Democrats can take some comfort in the fact that the full fury of resentment against them is still limited to the national party. State and local Democratic candidates and leaders have been able to retain the allegiance of enough traditional Democrats, outside the metropolitan centers, to win most state and local offices — so far — in every southern state. Before the 1984 election, ten of the 11 governors of the region were Democrats, and afterward there are still nine. Democrats control both legislative bodies in all the states, most of them by overwhelming margins. Except in metropolitan areas and in mountain counties whose tradition goes back to the Civil War, the GOP has made little progress in local politics.

Yet Southern Democratic leaders walk a difficult tightrope; they have to speak and act progressively enough to retain the allegiance of blacks, whose votes are crucial to their election, while not speaking or acting so boldly as to sound like a Teddy Kennedy or a Walter Mondale and thus earn the anathema reserved for northerners. As of 1984, they were maintaining their balance on the tightrope, but it is difficult to see how they can do so much longer. Conservatives who have become accustomed to voting regularly for Republican presidential nominees will find it easier every year to accept GOP candidates for other offices. Southerners have already extended their Republicanism to U.S. Senate races, with ten of the region’s senators now representing the GOP, and into a steadily-rising number of congressional districts. As the news from Texas indicates, many are now thinking of themselves as Republicans and voting that way for offices from the top to the bottom of the ticket. It is only a matter of time until the South, too, is finally realigned on the national pattern, with conservatives firmly ensconced in the party where they have belonged for 50 years. This does not mean



that the solid Democratic South will become a solid Republican South, but it does mean that the entire region will see a healthy two-party competition, with perhaps a slight advantage to the Republicans. And Republican gains in the South should be enough to bring the party into a fairly even balance with the Democrats nationally.

Republican Gains Elsewhere

Searching Tables 1 and 2 for clues as to who the new Republicans might be outside the South, one finds few concentrations by demographic groups. (The tables analyze only the white portion of the electorate, because the GOP gains have been wholly or preponderantly there.) One poll shows the majority of new Republicans to be men, the other women; in both cases, the “gender gap” still exists. Of more consequence now, perhaps, is the age gap that appeared so strikingly in 1984. Both tables show the Republicans pulling much further ahead of the Democrats among voters under 30 than in any older age group. Any party that is gaining strength always recruits disproportionately from among the young, particularly first-time voters, for they have yet to make a partisan commitment and are most caught up in the drift of a particular election. The consolation of the losing party is that the youngest voters are least

settled in their declared allegiance; with a bit of luck, the Democrats should be able to win back — or at least make independents of — some of the young Republican identifiers before their loyalties become fixed.

The tables indicate that the movement to the Republicans may be class-related, but inverse to the usual relationship. The Gallup data in Table 2 show the Democrats losing substantial ground among voters with the least educational attainment — always the basis of Democratic strength — while holding their own more successfully with the college-educated population. In Table 1, similarly, the Republicans registered their smallest gains at the top of the educational and occupational scales — among college graduates and professional, managerial, and white-collar groups — where the GOP has always been dominant. In both tables, labor union households stand out as an exception, maintaining a high degree of Democratic loyalty.

Among major religious groups, as shown in Table 1, the pro-Republican trend is most pronounced among born-again Christians, whom CBS/NYT designated as a separate category. These figures may, however, be little more than a duplication of the regional data, for the South has a disproportionate share of that religious subgroup. As of 1984, the political preferences of born-again Christians had not yet quite come into line with those of Protestants generally, which probably reflects the lag of Republicanism in the rural South. One might expect that the Republicans would show exceptional gains also among Catholics, through the movement of conservatives, who — like southerners — had remained in the liberal Democratic party by reason of group tradition and might now be moved by such issues as abortion. In fact, though, the data in Table 1 show no such trend.

"It is only a matter of time until the South, too, is finally realigned on the national pattern, with conservatives firmly ensconced in the party where they have belonged for 50 years."

Table 3.
Influence of Particular Issues in Democratic and Independent Voting for Reagan in 1984

Question and Response	Percent Democrats for		Percent Independents for	
	Mondale	Reagan	Mondale	Reagan
All voters	69	30	33	66
Compared to four years ago, is the U.S. economy				
Better today?	40	59	14	85
Worse today?	95	5	83	12
About the same?	86	13	63	34
What should the U.S. do first?				
Negotiate nuclear freeze	86	13	57	40
Strengthen our defenses	51	48	16	84
Should federal spending on the poor be				
Increased?	85	15	56	41
Kept where it is now?	59	40	24	74
Decreased?	56	43	14	83
Is the U.S. justified in having military forces in Central America?				
Yes	61	38	20	79
No	85	14	54	43
Do you think it will be necessary to raise taxes?				
Yes	87	12	60	39
No	62	37	23	75
Should abortion be legal?				
Yes, as it is now	82	17	48	50
Only in extreme circumstances	70	30	28	71
No	64	34	20	77

Source: CBS News/*New York Times* election day survey, 1984.

Within each demographic group, the significant questions relate to which individuals have been attracted to the Republican party and why. Are they economic conservatives, finally breaking ties that they have maintained to the Democratic party because of traditional family or group loyalty, as in the case of southern whites? Are they military and foreign policy conservatives, attracted by the pro-defense and anti-Soviet policies of the Republicans? Are they social conservatives, aroused by such issues as abortion, school prayer, and affirmative action, and alienated by the prominence of blacks, feminists, and other minority groups in the Democratic party? Sophisticated analysis of the new Republicans' motivations must await release of the findings of the University of Michigan Center for Political Studies' elaborate biennial poll, the only survey designed by political scientists expressly to provide answers to such questions. But the CBS/NYT poll did ask its respondents to express their views on several issues, and these provide a basis for some speculation.

Table 3 classifies Democrats and independents by their views on the issues addressed in the CBS/NYT poll and shows how many in each group defected to President Reagan in 1984. In all, 30 percent of self-identified Democrats voted for the opposing party's candidate. Presumably, the issue attitudes that were most strongly associated with the decisions of those

voters to cross the party line in casting their presidential vote would be the same ones that have been most influential in causing Democrats to leave their party and in persuading Democrats and independents to join the GOP.

The table makes clear that the state of the economy was by far the strongest issue in pulling Democratic and independent voters into the Republican column. A solid majority, 59 percent, of Democrats who considered the economy to be better than four years earlier supported Reagan. He was backed by nearly half of the pro-defense and anti-nuclear freeze Democrats and by more than 40 percent of those who opposed increased federal spending for the poor. Support for the stationing of U.S. military forces in Central America and opposition to increased taxes drew smaller proportions to the Republicans. Weakest of all, among the issues listed, was abortion. The percentage of anti-abortion Democrats defecting to Reagan was barely higher than the proportion of all Democrats who did so. Among independents, more than 80 percent of those who found the economy better, those who were pro-defense, and those who favored less spending for the poor voted for Reagan, as did more than 75 percent of those who favored the Reagan policies on Central America, taxes, and abortion.

When these figures are considered in relation to the amount of importance ascribed to the issues by voters, the predominant influence of the economy on the election outcome is confirmed. In a separate question, CBS/NYT asked which two of seven issues "mattered most in deciding how you voted" for president. The proportion of voters identifying each issue was as follows:

The economy	40
Arms control/threat of war	29
Strong U.S. defense	26
Reducing the federal deficit	23
Fairness toward the poor	20
Abortion	7
Policy toward Central America	4
None of these	3

Clearly, the success of Reaganomics was the preeminent factor in generating the Republican landslide of 1984, with the president's military and foreign policies ranking second. The one social issue on the list — abortion — trailed far behind.

Bridging the Intraparty Schisms

As the Democrats surveyed the wreckage of their party in November, a consensus rapidly developed as to the nature of their problem: They had become identified as a party of special groups — a "coalition of quotas," as one officeholder put it. If you were a black, a Hispanic, a feminist, a labor unionist, a homosexual, or a member of any other minority group fighting discrimination, you would find the Democratic party ready to embrace your cause. But if you were none of these, then the Democrats — the national party, at least — did not seem to have a place for you. And the election demonstrated that some of the organizations claiming to speak for large segments of the population could

"The dilemma the Democratic party faces is how to renew its appeal to the country's white middle-class majority — particularly the males — without abandoning its minorities, and therewith its principles."

not deliver much beyond their own active memberships.

The dilemma the Democratic party faces is how to renew its appeal to the country's white middle-class majority — particularly the males — without abandoning its minorities, and therewith its principles. The polarization of the electorate in 1984 raised disturbing questions. Are the divisions in society so deep that a party can no longer champion the rights of blacks without losing whites? Of women without losing men? In state and local politics, the answer so far has been negative. The Democratic party still holds the preponderance of governorships, mayoralities, and state legislative seats, and it has won those offices with leaders who have managed to appeal to voters across racial, religious, and gender lines. Men such as Edward Kennedy, Mario Cuomo, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, all Catholics, are elected with Protestant votes, and they carry precincts both black and white. Black mayors such as Tom Bradley in Los Angeles and W. Wilson Goode in Philadelphia are elected in cities predominantly white. Feminist politicians like Mayor Diane Feinstein of San Francisco and Representative Geraldine Ferraro are elected with about as much male as female support. A dozen southern and border state governors, even including George Wallace in Alabama, have successfully forged white-black Democratic coalitions. Western states that have not supported a Democratic presidential candidate for two decades elect and reelect Democratic governors and senators.

The problem for the Democrats is how to weld a winning *national* party out of its healthy state and local segments. The breach between its liberal northeastern base and its moderate-to-conservative southern and western elements has always been wide, but that was no problem so long as most of the South could be counted on to vote for the Democratic presidential nominee no matter how liberal he might be. Those days are gone, though, and now one suspects that a candidate who appeals to one wing of the party is almost sure to be rejected by the other. A Governor Cuomo in 1988 might sweep the North, but would he go the way of Al Smith — too much the New York Catholic, too outspoken a liberal, to make inroads in the South? And what southerner or westerner can speak the language that will send the party's northern big-city voters flocking to the polls? In 1984, Walter Mondale, Jesse Jackson, and Gary Hart appealed to quite separate constituencies within the Democratic party. After the primary season, 40 percent of Hart's supporters said they could not vote for Mondale if he were nominated, and 26 percent of Mondale's said they could not back Hart. Those who expected the bitterness to fade were disappointed; in November, CBS/NYT found that 31 percent of the Hart Democrats cast their votes for Reagan.

Between now and 1988, new Democratic leaders will emerge and test their appeal throughout the country. The one who shows the broadest geographic base of support will become the next Democratic nominee, if the party is lucky; given the hazards of the marathon nominating process, there is little the party's leaders can do, through deliberate action, to assure that outcome.

The AFL-CIO, the National Organization of Women, the National Education Association, and other exponents of group interests will presumably be chastened by the 1984 experience and withhold endorsements, and the candidate will know how to phrase his appeals to their followers in language that will not offend the middle-class majority. He will use the vice presidential nomination in the traditional way, to balance the ticket. If all those circumstances fall fortuitously into place, the Democrats will be in a sound position to profit from whatever mistakes and misfortunes befall the Republicans as they struggle with the nation's problems.

And the GOP's internal schisms, while not as severe as the Democrats', cannot be lightly dismissed either. The Republicans have their feisty and demanding minorities too, the various groups who collectively make up the New Right. The Christian fundamentalists intent on imposing their particular version of morality on the country, the militarists who prefer an unlimited arms race to arms control, and the libertarian fringe that would dismantle most of government are as far out of step with majority national opinion as are the extremists of the left, and they are as intolerant and doctrinaire. Yet they are now embedded in the structure of the Republican party and in the middle levels of the Reagan administration. The president has managed skillfully to marshal their support while retaining the old-line Republican conservatives as well, but when the contest for the 1988 succession heats up, the various GOP candidates will stake out positions on both sides of the party's internal divide and accentuate and dramatize the policy differences among its factions.

In any case, those who anticipate a long period of Republican hegemony cannot rely on either historical experience or current public attitudes. Even if the number of self-identified Republicans remains close to the number of Democrats, elections will be decided by the independents attached firmly to neither party and by the partisans whose attachments are weak. They make up a majority of the electorate, and they are not permanently conservative now, any more than they were permanently liberal at the time of the great Lyndon Johnson landslide 20 years ago. These typical voters embrace both liberal and conservative attitudes; their views are uncertain, changeable, muddled, often contradictory. They are centrist — or, more accurately, ambivalent — distrusting extremists of either left or right. At some times — as in the 1890s, the 1920s, the 1950s, and the 1980s — the conservative side of their ambivalence predominates. At other times — as in the 1910s, the 1930s, and the 1960s — they revolt against conservative governments and tilt to the liberal side. It is perhaps no accident that the political pendulum has swung with such rhythmic regularity; 30 years is a generation. On that schedule, another liberal ascendancy will come in the 1990s — but whether sooner or later, it will surely come at some time. Only two decades ago, the Republican party was given up for dead after the Goldwater debacle of 1964, yet it came back to win the very next presidential contest. With the rise of independent political attitudes and behavior, the electoral swings are more abrupt now, more massive. There is no reason to believe that this volatility will not continue.

The Future of the Democratic Party

William A. Galston

THE ARGUMENT of this article can be summed up in five propositions.

First: The 1984 election was a watershed in American political history. Democrats can no longer be regarded as the natural majority party at the presidential level — a station they enjoyed for half a century — and they are in serious danger of losing their majority status at every other level as well.

Second: These new circumstances are not accidents, but rather the predictable outcomes of long-established trends.

Third: Democrats have no chance of recovering their majority standing (although they may win an election from time to time) unless they come to grips with the true causes of their decline.

Fourth: There are no easy solutions to the Democrats' predicament, and the process of party reconstruction is likely to be both lengthy and traumatic.

Fifth: What happens to the Democratic party matters not just to Democrats, but to the country, because the party's fundamental commitments remain essential elements of sound public policy.

I. The New Democratic Minority

In the wake of Walter Mondale's shattering defeat, many Democrats have been counseling calm and patience. Mondale's rejection, they contend, was a purely personal repudiation with no larger significance for the Democratic party. They point to the party's gains in the Senate, its smaller-than-expected losses in the House, its promising electoral prospects for 1986, and the likelihood that Republicans will enter into a debilitating succession struggle after the midterm elections.

In my judgment, this argument is completely wrong, because it overlooks both what really happened in 1984 and the longer-term trends working to the disadvantage of Democrats.

In 1984, Republicans won two-thirds of the "open" congressional seats — that is, those for which no incumbent was on the ballot. Democrats retained control of the House only because of the power of incumbency. Republicans received nearly 50 percent of the vote for contested seats. They won six out of the seven open gubernatorial spots. They picked up more than 300 state legislative seats. And they dramatically closed the gap in party identification; indeed, recent polls suggest that it may have vanished altogether. Some 56 percent of all voters now rate the Republican party as better able to deal with our country's major problems.

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At the presidential level, the picture is even gloomier for Democrats. They have lost four of the past five elections. In those defeats, their share of the total vote averaged just over 40 percent. If not for Watergate (a handicap Gerald Ford could have and nearly did overcome), we would almost certainly be entering the seventeenth consecutive year of Republican chief executives and looking ahead to the twentieth — a period equal to the duration of the New Deal and the Fair Deal.

The presidency is won or lost in the electoral college, and that institution is increasingly weighted against Democratic nominees. A state-by-state analysis shows why.

There are 23 states, with a total of 202 electoral votes, that the Republican candidate carried in each of the five elections from 1968 to 1984. These states include not just traditional Republican bastions in upper New England and the farm and mountain regions, but also New Jersey, Illinois, Iowa, Oregon, and California. There are four other states, with a total of 42 electoral votes, that no Democrat has carried since 1968. And there are nine more states that no Democrat has won in this period except Jimmy Carter in 1976. By contrast, Democrats have won only the District of Columbia in all five elections, only Minnesota in four out of five. In short, Republicans now begin with an electoral college base not far short of a majority, while Democrats have virtually no base at all.

No Democrat has ever won the presidency without substantial, though not necessarily solid, support in the South. Yet it is in the South that the Republican tide is running the strongest. In the past five elections, no non-southern Democratic nominee has carried a single state in the deep South. (The last non-southerner to do so was John F. Kennedy.) In 1980, Ronald Reagan took Texas, every border state except West Virginia, and every southern state except Georgia. Seven of these victories were by 2 percentage points or less. In 1984, he swept them all — and in every case his margin of victory exceeded his national margin of 18 points.

Nor is this trend in the South confined to the top of the ticket. Ten of the region's 22 Senate seats are now held by Republicans, as are 42 of the 116 House seats (a gain of seven in 1984). Republicans have also registered strong gains in southern legislatures, and the party identification gap in the South has narrowed sharply.

II. The Causes of Decline

These facts bring me to my second proposition: The ascendancy of the Republican party is a product not just of inept Democratic nominees or bad luck, but also of fundamental choices made by the Democratic party and of shifts in the demographics and political dynamics of our society.

As a point of departure, recall the New Deal coalition, which was largely intact as recently as Kennedy's victory in 1960. That coalition included minorities, such as blacks, Jews, and Catholics; the poor; the working class, especially in unionized sectors; family farmers; and voters in big cities and the South.

Today, a quarter of a century later, that coalition exists more in memory than in reality. Elements of it remain, to be sure. Blacks, Jews, and the very poor, for example, support the Democratic party as lopsidedly as ever. Catholics and unionized workers are still more Democratic than the electorate as a whole. But farmers and the South have deserted the party. Moreover, economic change has produced a booming services sector, and with it a new class of politically independent professionals. The aggregate of naturally Democratic voters today falls far short of a majority.

How did this happen? What transformed a majority into a minority?

Let me begin with demography. As economic growth since World War II has shifted to non-unionized sectors of the economy and regions of the country, the percentage of the labor force belonging to unions has been cut virtually in half. As the percentage of family farmers in the population has steadily declined, so too has the influence of the rural populism that Harry Truman rode to victory throughout the farm belt in 1948. As millions of Americans have left the Northeast for the new corporate centers of the Sunbelt, the political balance has shifted in favor of Republicans throughout the South and Southwest. And as the Republicans have associated themselves with the fastest-growing states, leaving the Democrats to defend the interests of stagnant or declining states, the electoral college balance has changed dramatically. The same states that gave Kennedy a solid majority of 303 electoral votes in 1960 would today yield him only 280.

Beyond demography in this restricted sense is the broader phenomenon of social class. The New Deal brought together Americans of low and modest income against the coterie of the wealthy that FDR ringingly labelled "economic royalists." Until well after the Second World War, this coalition of disadvantage was a clear majority. But in the next two generations, real incomes rose sharply. Homeownership soared. Tens of millions of Americans moved into the middle class, and their children did even better. Electoral appeals directed at individuals who regarded themselves as powerless victims of privilege were much less effective in eliciting support from members of this new middle class, except when Republican recessions reminded them of the precariousness of their condition.

Accompanying the expansion of the middle class was the rise of the racial issue. During Roosevelt's four terms, the New Deal coalition was held together by a tacit but widely-understood agreement: In return for southern acquiescence in a radical expansion of the national government's economic powers, the northern Democrats who spearheaded that expansion would refrain from using national authority to reform southern racial practices. Blacks moved into the party not because FDR pushed civil rights legislation — he didn't — but because they were included in open-ended programs designed to ease the misery of the Depression.

This agreement was first disrupted at the party's national convention in 1948, when Hubert Humphrey led an insurgency that produced a strong civil rights plank and the Dixiecrat revolt that cost Truman four southern states. This began a gradual reversal in the historic po-

"The traditional Democratic formula of growth at home and strength abroad was subverted. And the concept of the national interest advocated by Democrats for half a century was dissolved into a myriad of benefits for specific groups — the so-called special interests. . . . Small wonder that one out of five Americans who had voted for Carter in 1976 deserted him in 1980."

sitions of the two parties. The contrast between, on the one hand, President Eisenhower's obvious reluctance to enforce the integration decisions of the Supreme Court and, on the other hand, President Kennedy's efforts to overcome resistance to those decisions and President Johnson's sponsorship of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts led those in the South who rejected the new racial dispensation to view the Democratic party as their foe.

By itself, this development would not have spelled electoral disaster. The nation as a whole believed that the Democratic party had acted honorably and correctly to remove legal impediments to equal citizenship. And as time passed, more and more southerners came to agree. Far more damaging politically was the effort to bring the civil rights movement north. Through such devices as affirmative action, busing, and targeted economic and welfare programs, the Democratic party took the lead in addressing racial disparities that could not be traced to unjust laws.

These efforts soon encountered grave difficulties. Their moral basis was controversial. Their effectiveness was limited at best. And they were perceived by many members of the white working class — a vital element of the Democratic coalition — as a threat to their jobs, schools, and neighborhoods. These key voters revolted, by "sending a message" through George Wallace and by casting their ballots in large numbers for Richard Nixon. Their attitude toward the Democratic party became one of deep skepticism.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the party acted in ways that reinforced this skepticism. The white working class cared about the assurance of a safe, orderly society, but the Democrats allowed themselves to be perceived as soft on crime and civil disorder. These voters espoused traditional values, but the party embraced nontraditional positions on such emotional issues as abortion, gay rights, and school prayer. Ferently patriotic, they favored a strong defense, but the party seemed to be dominated by advocates of steep defense cuts who proclaimed that the Vietnam war was not just mistaken, but immoral. They accepted the traditional American social philosophy of equal opportunity coupled with individual responsibility, but the party's intellectual elite advocated instead equality of result based on group membership. They identified, albeit in declining numbers, with unions, but the party instituted reforms that reduced working-class representation at the national convention in favor of minorities, young people, and single-issue activists.

In some respects, these developments were the outcomes of long-established tendencies. American society has always been a complex weave of abstract liberal principles and concrete cultural practices that frequently contradict those principles. (The classic example of such a practice is, of course, slavery.) During the twentieth century, the Democratic party became the arena within which these tensions were aired and addressed. The subordination of blacks to whites, of women to men, of youth to age, of deviant sexuality to family values, of Catholics and Jews to Protestants, of nonbelief to religion — all of these hierarchies, and others, were challenged in the name of personal equality and private

freedom. As a consequence, the authority of the once-dominant white Protestant culture was measurably eroded.

American liberalism had always preached equality of opportunity. But when this principle interacted with the new attack on hierarchy, it was significantly transformed. Even the most casual observation revealed enormous differences among the economic and social positions of different groups. Inequalities among individuals were to be expected; liberalism is perfectly consistent with varied individual allotments of talent and character. But gaps between groups were not so easily accommodated. If, *in the aggregate*, blacks are equal to whites, women to men, and so on, then in a well-ordered liberal society there should be no statistical differences among groups. If there are, then by hypothesis genuine equality of opportunity does not exist, either because the resources needed to develop talents are not fairly distributed or because the processes through which individuals seek to advance themselves are biased.

Lyndon Johnson's Great Society sought to attack both of these posited ills, by reallocating educational and other opportunities and by outlawing a wide range of overtly discriminatory practices. But progress was slow. It was tempting to cut the knot by reasoning from the premise that group inequalities are evidence of problems to the conclusion that these inequalities should be attacked frontally by legislating movement toward statistical parity. Thus, the Democratic party came to impose specific numerical quotas on the selection of delegates to its national convention and to sponsor programs of affirmative action throughout the society.

By a very different route, the new emphasis on cultural diversity led to a similar conclusion. No group, it was argued, could rightly claim superiority over others. But groups were dissimilar, in their formative experiences and in their aspirations. No group, therefore, could properly act on behalf of another; when decisions were to be made, each group had to be represented by members of that group.

The impetus behind this development was far from exclusively theoretical. There is, I believe, a sound distinction to be made between two very different kinds of politics: those of action and those of expression. The politics of action are dominated by Harold Lasswell's famous question: Who gets what, when, how? The politics of expression, by contrast, are animated by the drive for public recognition of and respect for the kind of person one is. In a society in which the very notion of a dominant ethnic or moral culture has been delegitimated, respect means the acknowledgment and acceptance not just of equality, but of difference.

All of these changes within (or spearheaded by) the Democratic party had a certain logic. But inevitably they came at the expense of those groups whose dominance was challenged — in particular, white men. Not surprisingly, their exodus from the party accelerated. By 1972, a Republican coalition combining southern and white working-class voters with the party's traditional base was coming into view. Kevin Phillips wrote presciently of the "emerging Republican majority."

And then, providentially, the Democrats were given one last chance. Watergate opened the way for a man who might have reconstituted the Democratic coalition.

Jimmy Carter turned out to be an inept president, but in 1976 he seemed ideally suited to the electoral task at hand. As a southerner, he could appeal to the South. As a moderate or even a conservative on social issues, he could speak the language of the white working class. As an outsider with a populist bent, skeptical of large, unresponsive institutions, he could productively channel the rising disaffection with government.

In the event, of course, things developed quite differently. Not only did Carter reinforce the perceptions that had alienated the South and the white working class, but he also undermined the most fundamental claims on which the Democratic party had rested its case for nearly half a century.

Ever since Roosevelt, Democrats had stood for economic growth and a strongly internationalist foreign policy. More broadly, the Democratic party incarnated the conviction that well-conceived policies of a vigorous central government would work to benefit all Americans.

George McGovern's campaign had eroded these claims; Carter destroyed them, both by his deeds and by the manner in which he defended them. The energy crisis, he implied, was not just a temporary setback, but the harbinger of an era of limits. But while growth slowed, inflation soared until it became a metaphor for a society seemingly out of control. Unsuccessful macroeconomic policies were supplemented by a profusion of programs "targeted" to the concerns of different supplicants. Abroad, Soviet advances were met ineffectually if at all, while Americans were urged to discard their allegedly inordinate fear of communism. The Iranian hostages came to symbolize national impotence and humiliation.

The traditional Democratic formula of growth at home and strength abroad was subverted. And the concept of the national interest advocated by Democrats for half a century was dissolved into a myriad of benefits for specific groups — the so-called special interests. Citizens who did not regard themselves primarily as members of such groups felt left out entirely. Small wonder that one out of five Americans who had voted for Carter in 1976 deserted him in 1980.

The Mondale campaign did not wholly avoid this trap. But even when the campaign succeeded in breaking free and presenting a rather different agenda, it made little headway — in large measure because it was perceived through the prism of the Carter presidency and the intraparty strife that had preceded it. And this tendency has persisted in post-election analyses.

For example, writing in the January issue of *Commentary* magazine, Joshua Muravchik contends that Walter Mondale was defeated because he had completed the "McGovernization" of the Democratic party. This verdict flies in the face of reality. After all, George McGovern himself was in the race for the 1984 Democratic nomination. His program included a huge cut in the defense budget, a substantial measure of unilateral disarmament, and a tilt toward the PLO. Mondale, by contrast, maintained a tough anti-Soviet stance and un-

"Walter Mondale was the candidate of the Democratic center, not of the New Politics. . . . What was defeated in 1984 was not some fringe candidate, not someone demonstrably unfit to govern the nation. It was the Democratic party itself, as it had come to be perceived by a strong majority of Americans."

wavering support for Israel; insisted on sustained real growth in the defense budget; backed a wide range of strategic weapons systems, such as the D-5 and Midgetman missiles, the Trident submarine, and the Stealth bomber; demanded nuclear parity in Europe; favored the continued deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles; advocated a major buildup of NATO conventional forces; rejected the "no first use" doctrine; torpedoed platform language that would have decoupled the United States from the allied defense of the Persian gulf; objected to any talk of rapprochement with Cuba; suggested conditions under which a quarantine of Nicaragua would be appropriate; and defended President Duarte of El Salvador while rejecting efforts to impose upon his government any form of power-sharing with the guerillas.

Walter Mondale was the candidate of the Democratic center, not of the New Politics. Within the constraints of his circumstances, he worked to defeat extremism and reassert the measured internationalism of his mentor, Hubert Humphrey. But he was never able to dispel the voters' powerful memories of a repudiated past. What was defeated in 1984 was not some fringe candidate, not someone demonstrably unfit to govern the nation. It was the Democratic party itself, as it had come to be perceived by a strong majority of Americans.

III. The Depth of the Democratic Difficulties

The current weakness of the Democratic party is not temporary, but fundamental, and the road to renewed strength is obstructed.

Irving Kristol remarked not long ago that while Republicans now have two agendas, Democrats have none. In key respects, unfortunately, he is right.

For two generations, starting with FDR, the Democratic party presided over the heroic age of American liberalism. Its vision was defined by the twin imperatives of general welfare and equal opportunity. Its historic mission was to mitigate the excesses of raw capitalism and to give excluded groups access to the mainstream of American life. Its chosen instrument was a strong central government — Hamiltonian means in the service of Jeffersonian ends.

This liberal impulse ran its course, a victim of its successes as well as its failures. It created a vast middle class that came to believe that the costs of further extending the welfare state would outweigh the benefits (at least to them) and that opportunity could be further equalized only by unduly restricting their freedom. In increasing numbers, this class came to take the benefits of government for granted and to feel only its burdens — higher taxes, increased regulation, heightened intrusion into social life.

At roughly the same time, economic growth slowed perceptibly. Unquestionably the oil price shocks of 1973 and 1979 contributed to the downturn. But throughout the industrialized West, many suggested that the rapid expansion of the welfare state was a brake on economic expansion. Nor was this perception confined to free-market ideologues or anti-egalitarian social theorists. A

noted liberal economist could write a tract entitled *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff*, which advanced the thesis that acting on the distributional concerns characteristic of contemporary liberals would undermine the growth goals of earlier liberal generations.

For these reasons, among others, a revolt against the federal government gathered strength. In the 1970s, it took the form of taxpayer rebellions. By 1980, a majority of Americans no longer wanted the government they had, no longer wanted even "a government as good as the American people." They wanted to get government off their backs. Ronald Reagan's simple message was that their wish was his command, and it carried him to two overwhelming victories.

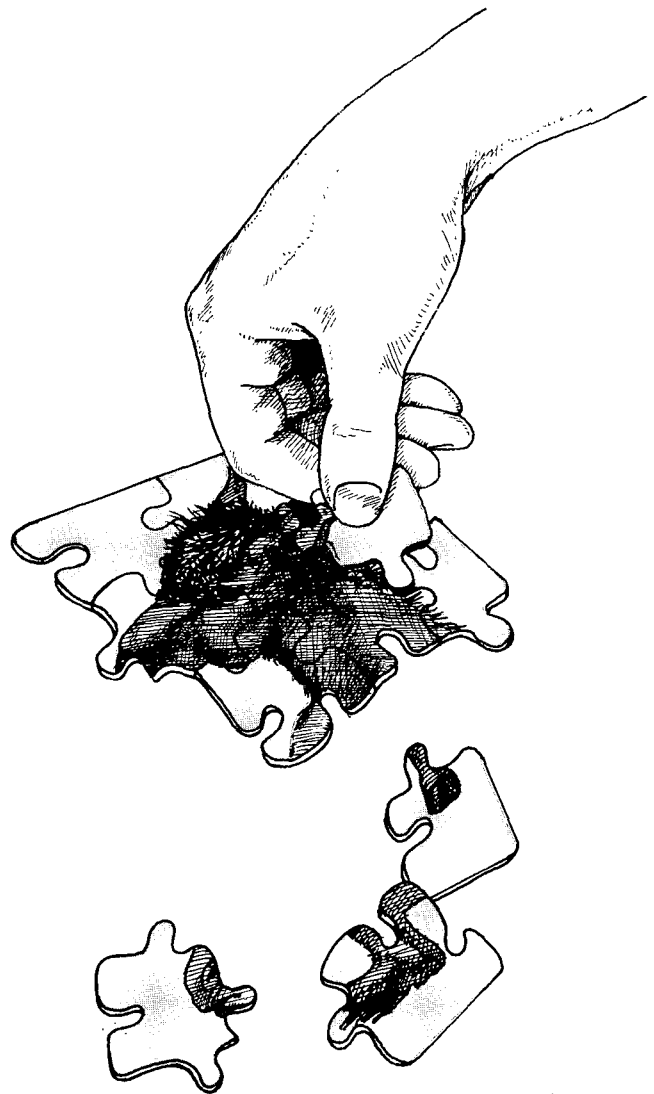
Today, the Democratic party backs many causes. But it has no guiding idea. It cannot, in current circumstances, stand for more government. It cannot, without losing its distinctiveness and integrity, stand for less government. And if it rests its case on the promise of better government, it risks the traditional fate of moderate reformers: the espousal of sound ideas that arouse intense opposition without generating fervent support.

This was the dilemma that bedeviled Walter Mondale. The budget deficit, combined with popular sentiment, made it difficult to articulate the traditional Democratic case for a more active government. But Reagan had preempted the opposite case. In any event, Mondale could not and would not embrace it. The shrinking-government thesis violated his deepest convictions, and no one would have believed homages to it from him anyway. So for lack of any other credible alternative, Mondale ran as a conservative. He argued that we should retain roughly the government we now have, reorder its priorities modestly, manage it more prudently — and pay for it. His case was sober and responsible. But it lacked inspiration and hope. Its rewards were all prospective. Current benefits would not be significantly increased; only burdens would be. No wonder one cartoonist portrayed Reagan strewing rose petals while Mondale handed out lumps of coal.

The economy posed Mondale's dilemma in its most acute form. There were three basic options. The first was to cede this terrain to Reagan, on the assumption that growth, coupled with lower interest rates and inflation, had removed the economy as a contestable issue — and to focus instead on fairness, social questions, and arms control.

The drawback of this approach was obvious. In the absence of overwhelming foreign policy issues, such as unpopular military entanglements, elections are ordinarily decided by the voters' judgments on the economy and the capacities of candidates to grapple with it. To abandon the debate on this subject was to concede far too much.

The second option was to attack the Reagan administration's contention that the recovery was benefiting the entire country. After all, unemployment among blacks, Hispanics, and young people remained at near-record levels. Hundreds of thousands of workers in basic industries were still laid off, many with no real prospects of returning to work. Entire communities were staggering under the burdens of plant closings, population declines, reduced tax bases, and increased demands for



Lise Gladstone

social services.

This option was employed selectively. But it posed two difficulties. First, it could not be pushed too far without losing its credibility. Mondale could not afford to be heard as denying the fact of the recovery altogether. Second, those who felt better off outnumbered those who had been left behind. The coalition of the dispossessed was intense in its policy preferences, but it was clearly a minority. To pitch his economic case to that minority alone was to court, if not ensure, defeat.

The third alternative — the one adopted — was to address the nation as a whole and to argue that because the recovery was built on a demonstrably insecure foundation, it could not last. The fatal flaw in Reagan's economic program was the unprecedented budget deficit, which violated both theory and common sense by rising in the midst of economic growth. This deficit might provide a temporary stimulus, but down the road it would lead (depending on the policy of the Federal Reserve Board) to either renewed inflation or another recession — to say nothing of an explosion of interest payments on the national debt, which had nearly doubled under Reagan and was projected to double again

by the end of the decade. Real interest rates (nominal rates minus inflation) were already at record levels. And, as Mondale had predicted for more than two years, these interest rates had produced currency distortions that hampered American exports and generated a surge of artificially cheap foreign imports. By the fall of 1984, the annual trade deficit had soared to \$130 billion. The gap between consumer demand and domestic production was widening, resulting in a noticeable slowdown in overall economic growth. Throughout the import-sensitive and export-dependent sectors of the economy, businesses were being forced to retrench or to export their production facilities.

Believing as he did that the Reagan deficits were an assault on our future, Mondale felt compelled to make them a central issue. He judged, plausibly, that he could not do so without offering at least the outline of a solution. The consensus of experienced economists was that at a minimum, the deficit had to be reduced to 2 percent of GNP (under \$100 billion by the end of the decade), compared with projections of over \$260 billion if nothing was done. Mondale concluded, with many others in both parties, that a tax increase was an indispensable element of any credible deficit reduction plan. This conclusion was reflected in the preliminary plan released in January of 1984; it was highlighted in Mondale's acceptance speech in July; and it shaped the final budget plan made public in September.

The deficit reduction initiative was an editorial success, but on balance a political liability. This was true in great measure because of a cynical campaign of distortion carried out by the administration. The president charged repeatedly that Mondale's plan would mean a tax increase of more than \$1500 for the average family. This figure was completely spurious. The facts were these. The average family of four has an income of slightly under \$25,000. For families making \$25,000 or less, the Mondale plan called for no tax increase whatever. A family with an income of \$30,000 would have paid an additional \$95 annually; at the \$40,000 level, the added tax would have been \$305. Only families at \$80,000 — in the upper 5 percent — would have been liable for the \$1500 increase cited by the president.

The administration's allegation flowed from three false premises. First, it imputed to Mondale spending proposals he had never endorsed and on that basis accused him of supporting a far higher total tax increase than he had in fact recommended. Second, it neglected the significant corporate component of the Mondale plan and assumed that the entire increase would fall on individuals. Third, it ignored the progressivity of Mondale's proposals. To derive its figure for the average family, the administration simply divided the total personal income tax increase (itself an inflated figure) by the total number of taxpaying families.

The administration's distortions helped turn the tax issue against Mondale. But tactical errors by the Mondale campaign also contributed to this result.

In the first place, although Mondale had proposed no new net domestic spending increases and had vowed to place all additional tax receipts in a trust fund dedicated to deficit reduction, these facts were not adequately emphasized. This allowed the Reagan administration to

portray Mondale's budget as a return to the bad old days.

Second, although Mondale had stressed fairness as early as 1981, denouncing huge Reagan tax breaks for corporations and wealthy individuals, this populist theme was muted during the crucial mid-summer period. The details of Mondale's proposal made it clear that the big winners under Reagan would be asked to bear the largest share of the increased tax burden. But the general message appeared to be one of broad-based sacrifice directed at the middle class.

Third, although the growing complexity of the tax code had raised justified suspicions that the wealthy exploit loopholes not available to average Americans, Mondale did not emphasize tax simplification and reform. A package along the lines of the Bradley-Gephardt bill or the Treasury Department's proposal might have transformed the tax issue and thrown the administration on the defensive. Instead, the debate focused solely on tax increases. Although Democrats had originated the idea of fundamental tax reform, the administration was given an opening that it has exploited in the wake of the election.

Mondale's efforts were not entirely without result. Through the summer and fall of 1984, a steadily rising number of voters identified the budget deficit as a key domestic problem. By election day, 55 percent agreed with Mondale's contention that taxes would have to go up, whoever was elected president. But because Mondale and the Democratic party lacked credibility as advocates of fiscal prudence, these beliefs were never translated into increased support. Americans were far more inclined to blame Congress or even Jimmy Carter for the deficit than Ronald Reagan.

Raising the salience of the budget deficit thus backfired. Tax fairness was a good issue for Democrats. Tax reform was a cause waiting to be seized by either party. But to the extent that fiscal prudence was a voting issue, the Democrats could not overcome adverse and entrenched public perceptions.

IV. The Absence of Easy Answers

For nearly four years, the Mondale campaign grappled with the problem of how to further the historic purposes of the Democratic party in changed circumstances. There were no easy answers then. Nor are there any today.

Many different proposals have been advanced, of course. Those who believe that the party has lost ground because it has moved too far to the left advocate a migration back toward the center, with a program emphasizing traditional values, reduced spending on social programs, and a strong national defense. The difficulty with this suggestion is that if it were implemented, the Democrats would come before the electorate as little more than a pale imitation of the Republicans. Under the circumstances, most voters probably would continue to opt for the real thing.

Others have urged on the party a somewhat more innovative centrism. Recently, for example, Governor Bruce Babbitt of Arizona has proposed a way of combining fiscal prudence with traditional Democratic prin-

ciples and goals. The party, he suggests, should employ a "universal means test" to determine eligibility for all federal programs. By slashing transfer payments and tax subsidies for those who don't need them, he says, we can free up funds for essential investments in human beings without resorting to the disagreeable expedient of tax increases.

The problem with this kind of proposal is that it drives a wedge between the two essential elements of any winning Democratic coalition: the disadvantaged and the middle class. The political logic of universal benefit programs, unencumbered by means tests, is well-understood: The middle class will support strategies that aid the poor so long as they receive advantages as well. It is no accident that the middle class loves medicare and hates AFDC, although the costs of the former are soaring while those of the latter are shrinking.

Babbitt's proposal thus illustrates a central difficulty for Democrats: While those who consider themselves have-nots no longer constitute even a potential majority, the alliance between haves and have-nots is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. If raising taxes is impossible and cutting defense spending is irresponsible, then aggregate domestic spending must be constrained. In that case, protecting universal programs that include the middle class means attacking programs directed toward the poor, and vice-versa. Republicans have been able to argue that Democrats have nothing to offer the middle class — and except when the administration threatens social security, they have been winning that argument.

Not surprisingly, some have argued that the entire notion of moving back toward the center is misguided and doomed to failure. The problem with the Democratic party, they contend, is not that it has been too radical, but rather that it has not been radical enough. The Carter administration's emphasis on austerity and the Mondale campaign's focus on the budget only confused workers and elements of the middle class who might otherwise have supported the party. Democrats, according to this reasoning, can reforge a majority coalition by speaking to the insecurity of those in the lower middle class whose lives have been disrupted by economic change. Full employment policies; job security; help for struggling family farmers; effective responses to unfair international competition — these and similar measures can help reunite the working class and agriculture with the disadvantaged to fashion a new populist alliance.

There are two obvious objections to this proposal. First, it overlooks most of the forces that have driven the lower middle class away from the Democratic party — including not just a feeling of neglect, but a deep-seated antipathy to many of the party's efforts on behalf of the disadvantaged. Second, it would position the party against the forces of economic change. Democrats would become defenders of the status quo, forfeiting any chance of invoking the dynamism and optimism that have always been at the heart of the party's appeal and the country's strength.

It appears that all the proposals for repositioning the party along the traditional left/right axis are deeply

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flawed. For this reason, Senator Hart and others have concluded that this entire line of argument is irrelevant. The issue, they say, is not the left versus the right, but rather the past versus the future. Democrats can rebuild a majority only on the basis of an agenda that addresses the fundamental changes underway in our economy and society, as well as in the international arena, and offers citizens hope that these changes can be understood and mastered.

On the most general level, it is hard to argue with this proposition. In practice, however, it doesn't work. The proponents of futuristic politics may believe that the traditional left/right issues are beside the point. But the American people don't yet agree. The themes that swept Ronald Reagan to two landslides — rolling back the welfare state, restoring social order, and getting tough with the Russians — are still uppermost. Besides, Reagan is himself a candidate of change. He has given the American people a vision of the future, and thus far they believe it's working. Moreover, passionate concern about the future is usually motivated by intense distaste for the present. Right now, at least, that doesn't exist among a majority of Americans.

V. Why This Matters

I turn, in conclusion, to the broader significance of this Democratic dilemma.

To begin with, our political system works best when the opposition party is strong and coherent. If it isn't, it cannot serve as an adequate check on the potential excesses of the majority party. Nor will it be ready to serve as a governing party if fate should so favor it — as illustrated by the Democrats' performance after their Watergate-induced victory in 1976.

In addition, there are some important truths that only a strong Democratic party can articulate.

"... if at present the balance we need must be achieved between rather than within our parties, then we must have an effective party of challenge, not just a dominant party of complacency."

The United States is a magnificent country, but it is not perfect. A governing party must be able to balance the two sides of this equation. Franklin Roosevelt, for example, did so in his second inaugural address. After reviewing the moral and material advantages we enjoy, he went on to declare, "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished."

In recent years, both parties have failed to strike this balance. Democrats have emphasized what's wrong, at the expense of our virtues and accomplishments, while Republicans have engaged in an orgy of national self-congratulation. Obviously, neither stance is correct. But if at present the balance we need must be achieved *between* rather than *within* our parties, then we must have an effective party of challenge, not just a dominant party of complacency. Can we have a sound foreign policy if we cannot ever admit error? That posture of putative infallibility is what Ambassador Kirkpatrick suggested in her "Democrats blame America first" oration to the Republican national convention. Can we have a sound domestic policy if social problems cannot even be acknowledged? That is what President Reagan suggests every time he denies the demonstrable fact that his economic policies have widened the gap between the rich and the poor.

By definition, complacency is comfortable — at least for the complacent. By nature, many truths are not comfortable — especially for the comfortable. But how can we make progress on such problems as the trade deficit, the decline of our basic industries, the unaffordability of housing for young families, the unavailability of day care for young parents, or the shrinkage of the middle class if the governing party refuses even to discuss them? And how can the president of the United States continue to insist that a rising tide lifts all boats when it manifestly does not?

In a democracy, as in every form of government, the highest vocation of the politician is to conjoin justice and truth to political power. In a democracy, as distinguished from other forms of government, this conjunction can only be achieved through persuasion. Leadership in a democracy thus always risks one of two errors — pressing too hard for what's right in violation of public opinion, or giving pride of place to popularity at the expense of what's right. Political excellence in a democracy requires the ability to judge accurately the limits of public opinion and to act effectively on that understanding.

I do not wish to suggest that the Democratic party has displayed political excellence, so defined, in recent years. Quite the reverse; the bulk of this article has been given over to the sorry history of a great party needlessly squandering its most precious asset: the confidence of the people. But I do want to suggest that the decline of the Democratic party is a matter of national concern, because it has a unique capacity to challenge us to diminish the gap between our practices and our principles in many areas of our social life.

The task of the Democratic party today is not just to regain a majority. It is rather to offer a compelling diagnosis of our national needs and a persuasive prescription for dealing with them. That task is vital and urgent. But it will surely not be easy.

Explaining the 1984 Presidential Election

Steven J. Rosenstone

WHY WAS Ronald Reagan reelected by such a resounding margin in 1984? Why, despite their edge in voter registration, did the Democrats lose the popular vote by over 18 points and manage to capture only 13 electoral votes?

There is no shortage of explanations for Reagan's triumph. Some political observers tell us that the victory was a testimonial to Reagan the man and to his ability to help create and reflect the mood of the time. Reagan won, it is said, because his was the politics of optimism; he fostered and capitalized on the upbeat belief that America was feeling better about itself. Reagan made people feel happy. Walter Mondale, in contrast, was the candidate of doom and gloom, preoccupied with the nation's problems. Reagan was a decisive leader; Mondale was weak and tentative. Reagan was a master of television; Mondale could not exploit the medium. Other analysts say that Mondale's proposal to raise taxes, his affiliation with special interest groups, and his association with Jimmy Carter and the malaise of the 1970s cost the Democrats a sizable share of votes. Still others claim that Geraldine Ferraro hurt the ticket because she alienated Southerners and because preoccupation with her husband's finances cost the campaign time and momentum. Some political commentators argue that it was Mondale's ineffective campaign and his failure to win a decisive knockout in the second presidential debate that brought on his lopsided defeat.

All of these factors may have had something to do with how some people voted in November, but they were not really the crucial forces responsible for Reagan's whopping victory. The important determinants of the outcome of the 1984 presidential election were in place long before most people heard of Geraldine Ferraro, long before the candidates squared off in front of the television cameras, and long before Americans met the bear in the woods (if there was a bear).

I want to focus on six factors that were responsible for Reagan's decisive win: (1) the lack of a strong, pre-existent Democratic electoral base; (2) an electoral college bias that favors the Republicans; (3) the booming economy; (4) Mondale's liberal stand on social welfare and racial issues; (5) Reagan's incumbency; and (6) the Republican party's advantage of unity.

Some Preliminary Observations

First, most election analysts ruminate exclusively about the popular vote for president. But elections are won or lost in the electoral college. One needs to explain not only why Mondale captured 40.8 percent of the two-party popular vote in 1984, but why he managed to lure only the District of

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Columbia and Minnesota into his column. What explains how each *state* voted?

Second, an explanation of the election outcome should also shed light upon why the Republicans did so much better in 1984 than they did in 1980 and 1976. To explain why a party's support waxes and wanes over time, one needs to identify the factors that vary across the years and are responsible for changing the results. Differences among election outcomes are explained by differences in the political and economic circumstances that are present when elections are held. The present task, then, is to identify the conditions that brought about the Democratic debacle in 1984 — conditions that were different from those in place four and eight years earlier.

Finally, if one's exegesis of elections is reasonably correct, it should be able to predict outcomes. The six factors I focus on not only explain why Ronald Reagan won so handily in 1984, but also successfully predicted his margin of victory nearly four months before voters cast their ballots.

My explanation and forecast of the 1984 election is based on an analysis of political, economic, and electoral data for all 50 states since 1948. I first formulated a model that took into consideration the factors that cause people to vote the way they do in presidential elections. I then employed standard econometric methods to analyze the 1948 to 1980 election returns to determine how much weight should be given to each of these factors. Next, I ascertained what conditions prevailed in 1984 and used the estimated weights to calculate what each state's vote would be in November. I aggregated the state-by-state forecasts to generate national popular and electoral vote projections as well.¹

My model accurately accounts for fluctuations in presidential voting between 1948 and 1980. Half the time the state presidential vote is predicted within 2.2 percentage points; 92 percent of the time the model

correctly predicts which candidate captured the state. The national popular vote is usually off by less than 1 percentage point. On average, the electoral college projection is within 35 votes of the actual result.

1984 Presidential Election Forecasts

I used the model on July 19, 1984, to project how each state would vote in November and what the national popular and electoral vote totals would be.² Table 1 summarizes these forecasts. The model predicted that Mondale would win 41.1 percent of the two-party popular vote (an error of only .3 percentage points). The projections indicated that the Democrats would carry the District of Columbia, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. Only in the District of Columbia did Mondale's chances of victory seem certain. The July forecasts were correct for all but two states: Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The state-by-state popular vote projections were off by an average of 2.6 percentage points.

When new economic data became available the weekend before the election, I updated the predictions. The November 4, 1984, forecasts (summarized in Table 2) showed Mondale's share of the national two-party popular vote dropping to 39.3 percent (1.5 percent below his actual share).³ Only the District of Columbia remained in his column. The model projected a 50-state sweep for Reagan. Mondale's home state of Minnesota ended up going his way in the election; the model underpredicted the Democratic vote there by 1.8 percent.⁴ The November forecasts had an average state popular vote error of only 2.5 points.

In short, the factors that explain the 1948 to 1980 elections also anticipated remarkably well the outcome of the 1984 contest. The remainder of this essay will discuss the conditions that were largely responsible for Reagan's decisive victory in 1984.

Table 1.
Summary of July 19, 1984,
Presidential Election
Forecasts and Errors

	Actual	Forecasted	Error
Democratic percentage of the two-party popular vote	40.8%	41.1%	— .3%
Number of states won by Mondale	2	4	—2
States won by Mondale	D.C. Minnesota	D.C. Minnesota Massachusetts Rhode Island	 X X
Average state popular vote error			2.6%

Table 2.
Summary of November 4,
1984, Presidential Election
Forecasts and Errors

	Actual	Forecasted	Error
Democratic percentage of the two-party popular vote	40.8%	39.3%	1.5%
Number of states won by Mondale	2	1	1
States won by Mondale	D.C. Minnesota	D.C.	 X
Average state popular vote error			2.5%

Table 3.
Traditional Democratic
Vote for President,
1952–1980

Rank	State	Average Democratic Presidential Vote 1952–1980 ¹	Number of Elections the Democrat Carried the State		Electoral Votes in 1984
		1952–1980	1968–1980		
1.	Nebraska	35.6	1	0	5
2.	Idaho	37.0	1	0	4
3.	Utah	37.3	1	0	5
4.	Kansas	38.3	1	0	7
5.	Wyoming	39.5	1	0	3
6.	Arizona	39.5	0	0	7
7.	North Dakota	40.0	1	0	3
8.	Oklahoma	41.2	1	0	8
9.	Vermont	41.9	1	0	3
10.	New Hampshire	42.5	1	0	4
11.	Indiana	42.5	1	0	12
12.	Florida	42.5	2	0	21
13.	South Dakota	42.6	1	0	3
14.	Virginia	42.7	1	0	12
15.	Colorado	42.9	1	0	8
16.	Nevada	43.0	2	0	4
17.	Mississippi	43.3	4	1	7
18.	Alaska ²	44.3	1	0	3
19.	Montana	44.4	1	0	4
20.	Iowa	44.6	1	0	8
21.	Louisiana	45.1	3	1	10
22.	New Mexico	45.3	2	0	5
23.	Maine	45.8	2	1	4
24.	New Jersey	45.8	2	0	16
25.	Tennessee	45.8	2	1	11
26.	Ohio	46.0	2	1	23
27.	South Carolina	46.4	4	1	8
28.	Illinois	46.8	2	0	24
29.	Texas	46.8	4	1	29
30.	California	46.8	1	0	47
31.	North Carolina	47.0	5	1	13
32.	Wisconsin	47.3	2	1	11
33.	Oregon	47.3	1	0	7
34.	Alabama ³	47.4	4	1	9
35.	Washington	47.6	2	1	10
36.	Kentucky	47.8	2	1	9
37.	Connecticut	48.0	3	1	8
38.	Delaware	48.4	3	1	3
39.	Maryland	48.7	5	3	10
40.	Michigan	48.9	3	1	20
41.	Pennsylvania	49.0	4	2	25
42.	Missouri	49.2	4	1	11
43.	New York	49.5	4	2	36
44.	Arkansas	49.5	5	1	6
45.	Minnesota	51.9	5	3	10
46.	West Virginia	51.9	6	3	6
47.	Georgia	52.6	5	2	12
48.	Hawaii ²	54.8	5	3	4
49.	Massachusetts	56.1	5	3	13
50.	Rhode Island	57.3	5	3	4
51.	D.C. ⁴	82.7	5	4	3

Sources: Walter Dean Burnham, Jerome M. Clubb, and William Flanigan, "State Level Presidential Election Data for the United States, 1824–1972," Ann Arbor, Mich.: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. *Congressional Quarterly Guide to 1976 Elections*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1977. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 17 January 1981; 10 November 1984.

Notes:

1. In 1952–1964 and 1972–1980, percentage of two-party presidential vote cast for the Democrats. In 1968, percentage of total vote cast for the Democrats.
2. Data for 1960–1980 elections.
3. Data exclude 1964 election.
4. Data for 1964–1980 elections.

Six Reasons Why the Democrats Were Trounced in 1984

1. Lack of a Strong Base of Support

The Republicans were two lengths ahead of the Democrats long before the 1984 race even began. The reason is quite simple. Because voters are creatures of habit, they are likely to support the party they are accustomed to voting for—and in recent decades, voters have grown accustomed to casting their ballots for Republican presidential candidates. 31 states (controlling 291 electoral votes in 1984) had gone Republican in at least six of the last eight presidential elections (Table 3). Republican candidates had carried 23 states (with a total of 202 electoral votes) in all four of the elections between 1968 and 1980. The Democrats had won only the District of Columbia in all four contests. Reagan had triumphed in 16 states in 1980 by a 20-point margin or better. The Democrats captured only the District of Columbia by that kind of margin.

Thus, Ronald Reagan entered the 1984 campaign with a solid base of electoral votes; the Democrats had none. The Republicans, not the Democrats, are the majority or “sun party” in presidential elections.⁵ If voters had simply cast their ballots in 1984 the way they had typically been voting since 1952, Mondale would have carried only six states and the District of Columbia, for a total of 52 electoral votes. The Democrats would have garnered about 47 percent of the national two-party popular vote. Although these traditional voting patterns alone explain Mondale’s loss, they do not fully account for the magnitude of his popular and electoral vote defeat. Other factors were clearly at work.

2. An Electoral College Bias That Favors the Republicans

The electoral college system also worked to Reagan’s advantage in 1984. Recall from high school civics that every state gets one electoral vote for each of its U.S. senators and representatives. Since no state—regardless of how small it is—has less than three electoral votes, fewer popular votes are needed to win an electoral vote from a small state than from a large one. For

example, only 100,206 votes were needed to carry Alaska’s 3 electoral votes in 1984; that works out to 33,402 popular votes per electoral vote. But to capture California’s 47 electoral votes, a candidate needed to win 4,694,765 votes—99,889 per electoral vote.

This disparity between the cost of winning an electoral vote from a small state and the cost of winning one from a large state produces a partisan bias if one party’s strength happens to be concentrated in the small states. A candidate who captures the small states needs fewer popular votes to amass an electoral college majority than a candidate who is strongest in the large states where electoral votes are more costly. Because the small states are more likely to be Republican than Democratic strongholds (Table 3), the electoral college system currently hurts the Democrats.

It is easy to see how the electoral college bias has manifested itself in recent elections. The rightmost curve displayed in Figure 1 shows the relationship between the winner’s popular and electoral vote percentages for the 1964 to 1984 elections. The curve on the left shows the same relationship for the 1932 to 1960 elections. If the curve cuts through the point where 50.0 percent of the popular vote intersects with 50.0 percent of the electoral vote, then neither party is advantaged by the distribution of electoral votes. Between 1932 and 1960 this was nearly the case: On average the Democrats needed 49.4 percent of the popular vote to capture 50.0 percent of the electoral vote, reflecting a tiny bias in favor of the Democrats. But in elections since then, the tables have turned. The match between state patterns of presidential voting and electoral votes has produced a substantial Republican bias. Simply put, the Republicans get a larger share of the electoral vote than they deserve given their share of the popular vote. Between 1964 and 1984, to be assured of an electoral college majority the Democrats needed 52.2 percent—not 50.0 percent—of the two-party popular vote. Compare the 1964 and 1980 presidential elections. In both contests, the winner received 90 percent of the electoral vote. To get his 90 percent, Lyndon Johnson needed 61 percent of the two-party popular vote; Ronald Reagan needed only 55 percent of the popular vote to secure virtually the same electoral vote total 16 years later.

Had every state voted 9.2 percent more Democratic in 1984, Mondale’s share of the popular vote would have risen to 50.0 percent. Fifteen more states would have been added to his column,⁶ but he still would have been 38 votes short of the 270 needed for an electoral college majority.⁷

3. The Booming Economy

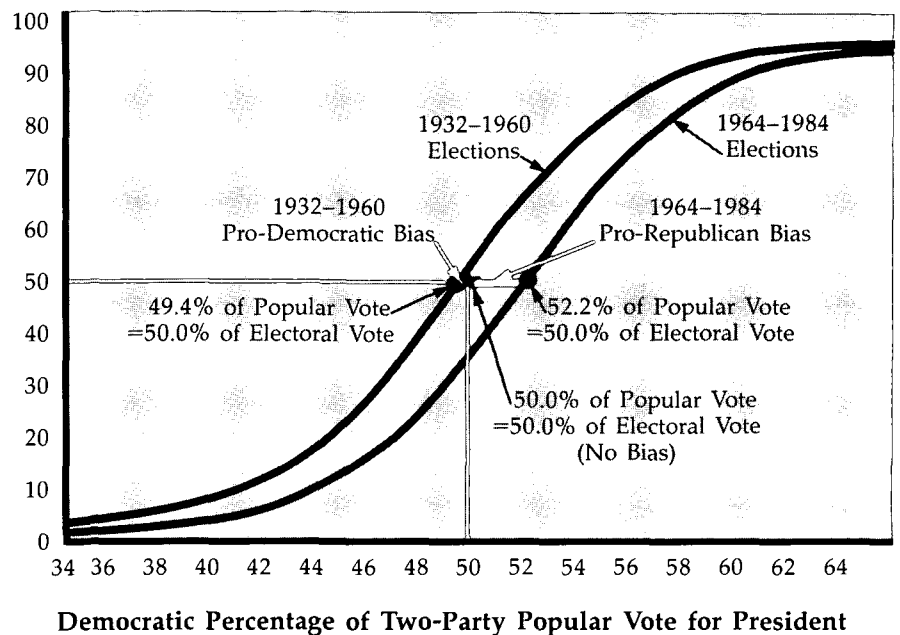
A third factor was also in place before the candidates entered the starting gate. The economy was flourishing in 1984, and this contributed handsomely to Reagan’s margin of victory. Per-capita real disposable income increased by about 5.8 percent in 1984, making it in economic terms one of the best election years on record (Table 4).

Not only were objective economic conditions working to the Republicans’ benefit in 1984; there was also a dramatic shift in the electorate’s perception of which party would be better able to keep the nation prosper-

“The match between state patterns of presidential voting and electoral votes has produced a substantial Republican bias.”

Figure 1.
*Relationship Between
Popular and Electoral
Vote for President,
1932-1984*

Democratic Percentage of
Two-Party Electoral
Vote for President



Note: Equation for 1932-1960: $\text{Log}(\text{EV}/(1-\text{EV})) = -14.04 + 28.40(\text{Pop})$; $R^2 = .96$
Equation for 1964-1984: $\text{Log}(\text{EV}/(1-\text{EV})) = -14.26 + 27.22(\text{Pop})$; $R^2 = .96$
where EV = Democratic percentage of the two-party electoral vote
Pop = Democratic percentage of the two-party popular vote

Table 4.
*Economic Environment
of the 1952-1984
Presidential Elections*

Year	Election Year Change In Real Disposable Income Per Capita	Party Best for Prosperity % of Electorate Saying		Ratio Dem/Rep
		Democrats	Republicans	
1952	1.1%	35	31	1.13
1956	2.7%	39	39	1.00
1960	0%	46	31	1.48
1964	5.6%	53	21	2.52
1968	3.1%	37	34	1.09
1972	2.9%	35	38	.92
1976	2.6%	47	23	2.04
1980	-.1%	36	35	1.03
1984	5.8%*	36	49	.73

*Estimate

Sources: *Economic Report of the President*, 1984; *Gallup Opinion Index*, September 1976; *Gallup Poll Release*, 28 September 1980; 23 August 1984.

"Incumbent presidents are usually reelected. During this century incumbents have won 12 of the 16 elections in which they have run. Only the most unusual circumstances have brought defeats."

ous. Citizens had traditionally viewed the Democrats as the party of prosperity (Table 4). But this perception changed in 1984, and in a big way. By a sizable margin — 49 to 36 percent — citizens now considered the Republicans better able to manage the nation's economy.

These two forces — the actual economic conditions in 1984 and the shift in the electorate's perceptions about the management capabilities of the two parties — boosted Reagan's vote total by about 3 points over and above what it would have been had 1984 been a typical economic year. In sum, Reagan won votes both because people thought they were better off financially⁸ and because they believed that they would continue to prosper under a Republican administration.

4. New Deal Social Welfare and Racial Issues

Dozens of issues arise in every election. Some have a significant impact on who wins because they affect how large segments of the electorate vote, but most are important only to relatively small groups of people. Even though they may affect how those few citizens cast their ballots, in the aggregate they have only a miniscule effect on the outcome.

Two sets of issues have dominated American presidential politics for half a century and have played a crucial role in determining how elections turn out. The first set—New Deal social welfare issues—has divided the political parties since the 1930s. Social welfare liberals advocate using the federal government's resources to tackle the nation's social and economic problems. Conservatives, on the other hand, doubt the federal government's ability to manage the economy, are skeptical about regulation of business, and think that state and local governments or the private sector, not the federal bureaucracy, should address social and economic problems.

In the decades since the Second World War, racial questions have also been important. Over time, the specific issues have changed: the Fair Employment Practices Commission, equal education opportunities, voting rights, open housing, busing, and affirmative action. But

the underlying disagreement has remained more or less the same: Liberals have supported a strong federal role designed to guarantee racial equality and blacks' rights; conservatives have tended to resist such legislation.

Although these two sets of issues had a negligible effect on northern voters in the 1984 presidential election, they had a substantial impact in the South. Southern states were, on average, 10.0 points more Republican in 1984 than in 1980.⁹ Most of this southern swing to the Republicans was a reaction against Mondale's liberal position on these two sets of issues. Mondale's racial liberalism cost him about 4 to 5 points in the average southern state; his New Deal social welfare liberalism cost him an additional 3 points. Jessie Jackson's candidacy helped keep these issues salient in the minds of southern whites, more than seven out of ten of whom cast a ballot for Ronald Reagan.¹⁰ Moreover, the much-advertised mobilization of new black voters in the South was easily offset by the counter-mobilization of whites. At southern polling booths in 1984, whites still outnumbered southern blacks by more than six to one.¹¹

The rest of the swing in the South — about 2 points — was due to the lack of a Southerner at the top of the Democratic ticket. The small "friends-and-neighbors" effect¹² that Jimmy Carter enjoyed in 1976 and 1980 was not there to help the Democrats in 1984.

5. An Incumbent President

Ronald Reagan's incumbency was a fifth factor that was in place in 1984 and helped shape the election outcome. Incumbent presidents are usually reelected. During this century incumbents have won 12 of the 16 elections in which they have run. Only the most unusual circumstances have brought defeats. William Taft lost his three-way race against Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson; Herbert Hoover was denied a second term in the depths of the Depression; Gerald Ford, an appointed president, was defeated in his first national election in 1976; and Carter failed to be reelected in the worst election-year economy since the 1930s.

An incumbent president enjoys a host of advantages over his challenger — advantages that are translated into votes on election day. Citizens do not clearly distinguish between the *president* and the *presidency*, which means that an incumbent benefits from the electorate's attachment to the symbols of office. Voters are impressed by the accoutrements of the presidency: Air Force One, the presidential motorcade, scurrying aides, and, of course, the White House. A president acts presidential, behaving as a nonpartisan national leader, hard at work running the government. This Rose Garden strategy allows a president to portray himself not as a mere politician out hustling for votes, but as the nation's diligent leader, above the fray — signing bills, meeting with aides and foreign dignitaries, touring military bases.

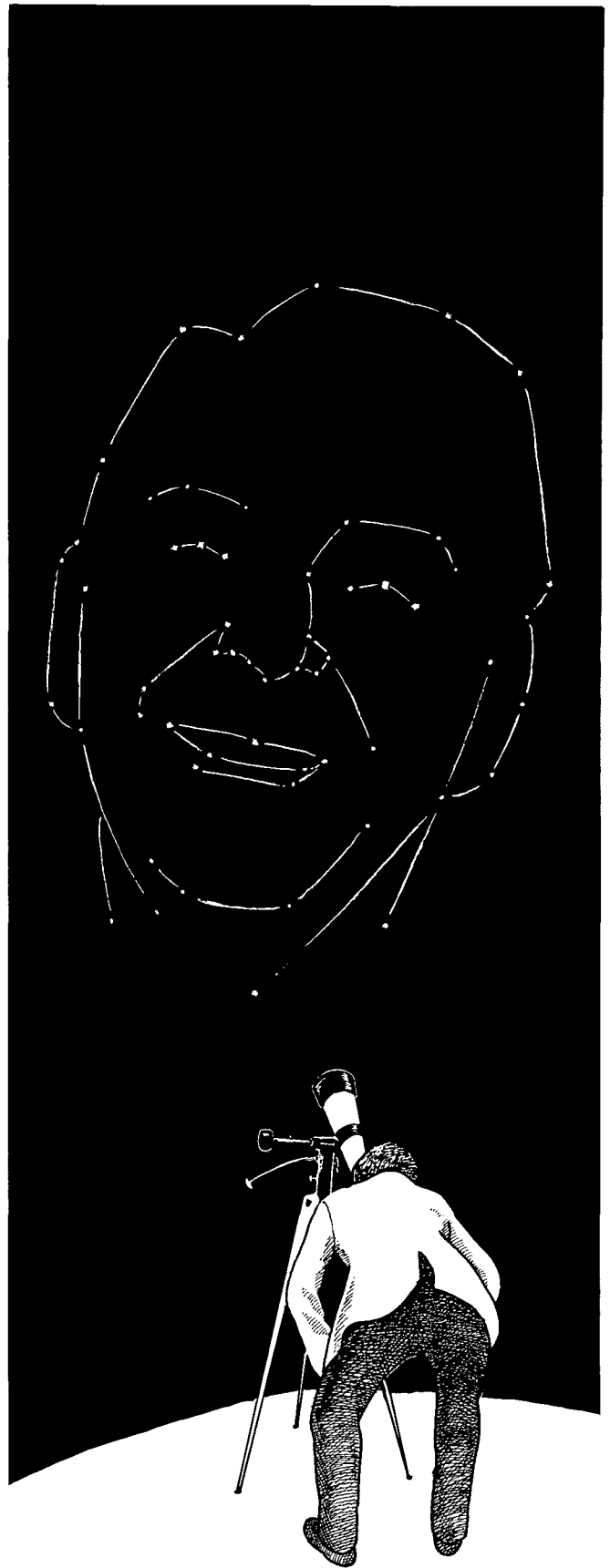
Of course, the president also controls the instrumental resources of office. He can make political appointments to attract social and ethnic groups to his coalition. His position, staff, and access to information allow him to shape the political agenda to his benefit. A president also designs policies with elections in mind. For example, he strives to ensure that election years have booming economies, and he times boosts in transfer payments and federal grant announcements to arrive close to election day. Similarly, he can funnel federal grants and contracts into critical states to shore up his political support.

The president also enjoys a tremendous advantage in the media, receiving more coverage than any person in America. But more important than the sheer volume of stories are the positive images that they convey. For every unfavorable story about the White House, there are two favorable ones. Pictures, too, are overwhelmingly positive in the impressions that they convey.¹³ And during the campaign, an incumbent president can count on two or three times more network news airtime than his challenger.¹⁴

Ronald Reagan ran as the incumbent this past fall. He controlled the symbols and resources of office; he was able to influence political events, such as the timing of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's visit in October; he could distribute particularized benefits where needed; he dominated the media. My election model indicates that the advantage of incumbents boosted the GOP's presidential vote by about 3 points over what it would have been had the Republican candidate not already occupied the White House.

6. A Unified Republican Party and A Divided Democratic Party

Unified parties win more votes in presidential elections than divided ones. Reagan was the Republicans' unanimous choice in 1984; Mondale led a splintered party. This factionalism among the Democrats cost Mondale about three-fourths of a point in November. Voters who are dissatisfied with their party's nominee have a tendency to sit out the general election—and if they do vote, they are more likely to defect than are people who backed the nominee during the primaries. In 1984, roughly one-third of Gary Hart's supporters voted for Ronald Reagan in November; only 4 percent of those who supported Mondale for the nomination abandoned him on election day.¹⁵



Lise Gladstone

Conclusions

President Reagan's victory in 1984 and the margin by which he won were due to conditions that were in place well before the campaign even began: ingrained voting patterns; the Republican bias in the electoral college; a booming economy coupled with a shift in which party was perceived as better able to keep the nation prosperous; a Democratic candidate who was out of step with most southern voters; Reagan's incumbency; and the match-up between a united party and a divided one. These factors not only explain, in retrospect, what happened in November; they successfully forecast the election nearly four months in advance. One implication of the foregoing analysis is that the attention that political commentators lavished on the day-to-day hoopla of the 1984 campaign obscured the fundamental dynamics of the contest. These observers described in great detail the texture of each leaf of every tree, but missed the proverbial forest: the political and economic setting in which the election was being conducted. The six factors I have discussed may not be as "newsworthy" as a presidential debate, a campaign gaffe, a well-orchestrated rally, or a provocative commercial, but they do explain why Ronald Reagan won so resoundingly in 1984.

This interpretation of events also has implications for the Democratic party's strategy for building a majority coalition in 1988. Obviously, if the Reagan administration presides over an economic debacle as Jimmy Carter's did, or if it gets bogged down in a foreign policy quagmire like Lyndon Johnson's, the Democrats' prospects for capturing the White House are greatly improved. Barring such blunders, however, the Democrats face an uphill road. They need to break the Republicans' grip on the South and on states west of the Mississippi River. If they fail to do so, then everything else is academic, because these states (excluding Minnesota and Hawaii) control 290 electoral votes — 20 more than are needed for victory.

It is difficult to see how an electoral majority can be assembled by the Democrats if they continue to nominate presidential candidates who are as liberal on social welfare and racial issues as the party's nominees traditionally have been. Keep in mind that the Democrats

have won only one of the last five presidential elections. Victory in 1976 required a relatively conservative Democratic nominee, running against a weak incumbent saddled with a moderately poor economy. And even this win was a real squeaker: There were only 27 electoral votes to spare. If Carter had been as liberal as Walter Mondale, or if social welfare and racial issues had been as important in 1976 as they were in the 1960s, Carter surely would have lost.

The Democrats need a new issue—one that touches people's lives in a meaningful way, an issue around which the diverse constituencies of the old New Deal coalition, and other groups as well, can unite. Clearly, a battle cry of racial and social welfare liberalism won't do the trick. Perhaps the current administration will bungle its management of the government and hand the Democrats a transient issue for 1988, but that is not the stuff of which enduring coalitions are made.

1. The details of my model and forecasting methods are spelled out in *Forecasting Presidential Elections*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983.

2. I first presented these forecasts in a lecture at Jefferies and Company, Inc., in Boston on August 1, 1984. A copy of the state-by-state forecasts can be obtained by writing me at 3532 Yale Station, New Haven, Ct. 06520.

3. Three-quarters of this error was caused by the model's overprediction of Reagan's margin of victory in seven of the eight largest states.

4. The model forecast that there was about one chance in three that Mondale would carry Minnesota.

5. Samuel Lubell introduced this term in his *The Future of American Politics*, New York, Harper, 1951.

6. A 9.2 percent swing would have produced Democratic victories in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maryland, Iowa, Pennsylvania, New York, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Oregon, Hawaii, Washington, Illinois, California, Tennessee, and Vermont.

7. An electoral college anomaly would have also emerged in 1976. Had every state voted 1.1 percent more Republican in that year, the Democratic national popular vote would have dropped to 50.0 percent and Jimmy Carter's electoral vote would have fallen to 254 — 16 votes below the 270 needed to win the election.

8. Although Reagan (and some pollsters) were fond of asking people whether they were better off than they were four years earlier, voters have much shorter memories. They tend to look back one year, not four years, in reaching economic judgments.

9. This compares to a Republican swing of only 2.2 percent in the rest of the country.

10. *New York Times*/CBS News Poll, reported in the *New York Times*, November 8, 1984, p. A19.

11. *Ibid.*

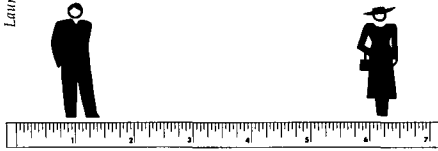
12. The phrase was coined by V.O. Key in *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, New York, Random House, 1949.

13. Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News*, New York, Pantheon, 1979. Michael B. Grossman and Martha J. Kuman, *Portraying the President*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

14. Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure, *The Unseeing Eye*, New York, Putnam, 1976, pp. 34–39. Ernest Leiser on MacNeil/Lehrer Report, Public Broadcasting Service, September 10, 1984.

15. *New York Times*/CBS News Poll, reported in the *New York Times*, November 8, 1984, p. A19.

"President Reagan's victory in 1984 and the margin by which he won were due to conditions that were in place well before the campaign even began."



The Gender Gap: Different Issues, Different Answers

Ethel Klein

THERE WERE great expectations among Democratic strategists for the women's vote in 1984. It was anticipated that large numbers of women—because of what they saw as President Reagan's lack of compassion for the disadvantaged, his aggressive foreign policy, and his failure to support women's rights—would help to unseat the incumbent president. Women's loyalty to the Democratic ticket was assumed to be sealed by the nomination of the first woman vice presidential candidate.

It is not surprising that the landslide reelection of Ronald Reagan buried the women's vote. However, there *was* a gender gap in 1984—and any analysis of the election that disregards the women's vote will miss its significance for the future of American politics.

Voting Patterns in 1984

The gender gap helped to keep Reagan's coattails short. The women's vote is part of a complicated process forestalling a political realignment in this country. More women voted for Reagan than for Mondale, but women were less supportive of the president than were men. In 1980, there was an 8 percent difference between Reagan's proportion of the male vote and his share of the female vote. The gender gap reported in 1984 ranged from 8 percent in ABC's exit poll and 9 percent in NBC's down to 6 percent in the CBS survey. These differences in candidate choice reflect differences in the issue priorities of men and women. In general, men are much more supportive of Republican policies than are women.

The gender gap, once defined as the Republicans' problem with women, is now framed in terms of the Democrats' problem with men. In truth, the Democrats have problems with every group except for blacks and Jews. The Republicans do have a problem with women, one that they need to defuse in order to become the majority party. This point is best illuminated by an examination of Senate and House races.

The 1984 election is being characterized as a personal victory for Reagan but not an enthusiastic endorsement of Republican policies. Despite the size of Reagan's winning margin, the Democrats managed to gain two Senate seats and hold their losses in the House to 14 seats. The women's vote played a critical role in holding down a Republican surge.

The exit polls summarized in Table 1 make this evident. The women's vote seems to have been the key to victory for liberal Democratic candidates in four Senate races: those in Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Michigan. To put the point another way: While potential sampling errors and cross-poll differences muddy the picture a bit, had only men voted the Republi-

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cans might have posted a net gain, rather than a loss, of two Senate seats. The Democrats benefited from a gender gap in House races as well. According to ABC and NBC, 53 percent of women—compared to 47 percent of men—supported Democratic congressional candidates.

Differences of Opinion

A distinct women's vote can be said to exist in either of two circumstances. First, if men and women have different views of what is best for the country generally or for women in particular and these differences are reflected in correspondingly disparate candidate choices; or second, if men and women favor the same candidates but for different reasons.

Surveys indicate that women tend to be more liberal than men on a variety of issues, including defense, environmental protection, social services, women's rights, and economic security. However, particular issues tend to be more important for some groups of women than for others. For example, middle-class women are most concerned about world peace, women's rights, and educational and economic opportunities, while working-class women focus on social services, employment, and economic security.

Women are not a cohesive electoral bloc as blacks, Hispanics, Jews, and labor have at times been characterized. While women's rights issues are an important factor in the gender gap, the women's vote is not so much a reflection of policy assessments in terms of conscious group interests as it is a result of women's increased confidence in their ability to assess public policy and of expectations for the role of government that draw on their experiences and values as women. Each woman makes her own private judgment as to what would best promote the welfare of the country and votes on the basis of the issues most important to her; in the aggregate, these individual judgments result in a women's vote.

The Evolution of the Women's Vote

The origins of the women's vote can be traced back to the period of social reform at the turn of the century. While men bent their efforts to the building of industry, women worked—through settlement houses, women's clubs, and welfare agencies—for such social reforms as health and housing inspections, consumer protection, child labor restrictions, and minimum wage laws for women workers. The vote came to be viewed as a means to implement this reform agenda. World War I gave women another reason to press for suffrage: their concern about the maintenance of world peace.

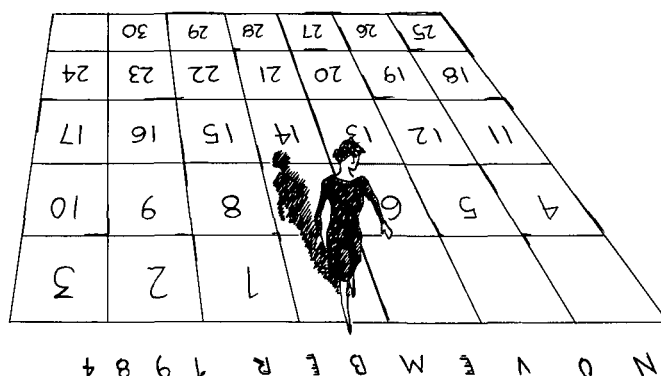
Once women were granted the vote in 1920, women's groups chose to be nonpartisan and to pressure both parties for the enactment of progressive legislation. In anticipation of a women's vote, Congress passed a health care education program for mothers, a consumer protection bill, a law reforming citizenship requirements for married women, and legislation upgrading the civil service. But the women's vote failed to materialize. Women did not vote in great numbers during the 1920s. Moreover, those women who did vote tended to

vote like men.

Voting behavior is learned through repetition; having voted once, a person is far more likely to vote again. But the development of this habit requires time and experience. Many women who had been raised prior to the advent of suffrage, and who had been taught that politics was the domain of men, never crossed that barrier to electoral participation. However, the next generation of women was more politically active. A majority of eligible women voters (59 percent) cast a ballot in the 1948 election—a turnout rate that, for the first time, was within hailing range of the rate for men (69 percent that year).

This participation gap shrank further in the 1960s and then closed dramatically in the 1970s. As higher proportions of women entered the labor force and attended college, they accumulated more political information and resources and became more confident and assertive as political actors. Surveys document increasing support for women's entrance into the political world. In 1972, 51 percent of the public felt that women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country to men, and 62 percent believed that men are emotionally better-suited for politics than women are. By 1983, these propositions drew support from only 22 percent and 34 percent of those surveyed.

The heightened approval of women's involvement in politics is paralleled by growing political awareness and knowledge on the part of women. Surveys taken between 1964 and 1984 show that women's psychological involvement with public policy questions has increased and that gender differences in policy choices have widened. Traditionally, women were more likely than men to answer "don't know" to survey questions regarding issues. Gender differences in the proportions of "don't know" responses have been decreasing since 1964; women have become markedly more willing to express policy preferences. The largest drop occurred between



Laura Costas

Table 1.
The Women's Vote:
1984

	CBS		ABC		NBC	
Presidential	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Reagan (R)	62	56	62	54	64	55
Mondale (D)	38	44	38	46	36	45
Senate Races						
Illinois						
Simon (D)	49	58			50	55
Percy (R)	51	43			50	45
Iowa						
Harkin (D)	54	59	49	53		
Jepsen (R)	46	41	51	47		
Massachusetts						
Kerry (D)	46	59	52	61	51	65
Shamie (R)	54	41	48	39	49	35
Michigan						
Levin (D)	49	53			51	56
Lousma (R)	54	41			49	44
North Carolina						
Hunt (D)	44	48	41	52	46	57
Helms (R)	56	52	59	48	54	43

1972 and 1976, as the women's movement helped women to define their political interests and encouraged them to articulate their policy concerns.

As the political confidence of women has increased, so too has the extent to which their policy preferences diverge from those of men. These disparities are most evident on the kinds of issues that spurred the fight for suffrage in the first place: peace, social services, consumer protection, political reform, and women's economic rights. The largest and most persistent differences are to be found on policy questions that have to do with violence. Thus, during the seventies women were less favorable than men toward military intervention, defense spending, and the assumption of a tough posture toward the Soviet Union. Similarly, they were more likely to oppose the death penalty and the draft and more likely to support gun control.

In a variety of domestic policy areas, women have tended to be more partial than men to government activism. For example, they have been more likely to favor the shutting down of nuclear power plants, the pursuit of environmental protection even at the cost of economic growth, retention of the 55 miles per hour speed limit, fines for people who do not use seat belts, jail terms for drunk drivers, bans of cigarette ads, and measures to reform campaign practices. In addition, especially since the mid-1970s, women have been markedly more supportive than men of government efforts to help minorities and the poor. These differences in the perspectives and priorities of men and women have been the bases of the gender gap.

The Turning Point

The long-awaited women's vote arrived in 1980 and persisted through 1984 because Republicans campaigned on precisely those issues on which men and women have most clearly parted company. In 1980 (as he would do again in 1984), Reagan offered voters a

clear-cut alternative to the New Deal: on one hand, decreased spending on social services and jobs programs and less vigorous civil rights enforcement; and, on the other hand, increased defense spending and a heightened reliance on market mechanisms to improve the lot of the disadvantaged. While narrow pluralities of both men and women professed to favor a reduction of government services, the proportion of men supporting cutbacks was about 10 percent higher than the corresponding proportion of women. At the same time, the percentage of men who backed increases in the military budget was a full 12 points higher than the share of the female electorate partial to such increases.

In 1980, the Republican party repudiated its long-standing commitment to the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment—this at a time when public support for the ERA, and for feminist goals generally, was growing. Majorities of men (60 percent) and women (63 percent) thought that the sexes should have equal roles in running business and government; the proportions favoring the ERA were 54 percent and 60 percent respectively. Because of the Republican party's about-face on the ERA, feminism became a partisan issue.

Matters of personality and leadership played major roles in the 1980 campaign. Carter portrayed Reagan as a trigger-happy demagogue who was bound to involve the United States needlessly in war, and Reagan contended that Carter had proven himself to be an incompetent president. A majority of the electorate—63 percent of the men and 51 percent of the women—agreed with Reagan that Carter had done a poor job overall.

According to the 1980 National Election Study conducted by the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies, men and women cast their votes on the basis of different considerations. For both men and women, Carter's overall performance and a desire to reduce government spending were central concerns. However, a wide range of issues—the Iranian hostage

crisis, inflation, government aid to minorities, and the defense budget—proved to be much more important factors in the decisions of men than in those of women. On the other side of the ledger, Carter's support for women's rights was more often a so-called voting issue for women than it was for men. Thus, the gender gap that emerged in 1980 was not simply a matter of Carter versus Reagan; it reflected significant differences in the priorities and perspectives of men and women—and it augured some fundamental shifts in the rules of the political game.

An Important Midterm

The 1982 elections demonstrated that the gender gap was a partisan phenomenon or issue vote independent of Reagan. Higher proportions of women than men voted for Democratic candidates in 73 percent of the 85 statewide races covered by the networks' polls. The 1982 National Election Study found a 6 percent gender gap in favor of Democratic congressional candidates; in districts where there was no incumbent running for reelection, the gap averaged 16 percent.

In 1982, the differences between men and women in their levels of commitment to New Deal policies increased. For instance, 45 percent of the men, but only 29 percent of the women, advocated further reductions in government services in the midst of what was a severe recession. Similarly, 37 percent of the men, as compared with 22 percent of the women, favored additional increases in defense spending. More women than men felt that too little was being spent on environmental protection (a 10 percent gap), education (9 percent), and programs to reduce unemployment (9 percent).

Women were much less supportive than men of Reagan's economic policies. Men were more apt—the differential was 56 percent to 43 percent—to say that the

policies had been beneficial. They were also considerably more positive in their assessments of Reagan's record on inflation (a 14 percent gap), arms control (11 percent), defense (10 percent), and the environment (10 percent). The majority of women disapproved of Reagan's handling of these issues, while the majority of men commended his performance.

The 1982 National Election Study revealed that, once again, men and women made their voting decisions on the basis of different concerns. For men, the key factors were their views—and those of the congressional candidates—on defense spending increases and Reagan's economic policies. For women, the most influential issues were matters of budgetary priorities: how much should be spent on education, health care, aid to the handicapped, environmental protection, welfare, and other social services.

In both 1980 and 1982, the women's vote was triggered by campaigns that focused on the distinctions between the policies and priorities of the two major parties or candidates. In essence, the women's vote is an issue vote; it will not surface unless the candidates in a race discuss the issues and make their differences understood.

Republican campaign committees have been monitoring the gender gap since the 1980 election. Initially, their pollsters focused on sex differences in approval ratings of Reagan's performance. As the recession deepened from February to June of 1982, they found that women's disapproval of the president's policies had spilled over into evaluations of Republican congressional candidates. According to Linda Duvall, director of coalition development for the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, analyses of the 1982 congressional races revealed that the Reagan program had left Republican candidates vulnerable among women voters on questions of fairness and economic performance. Their private polls also alerted Republicans to the fact that women were not a monolithic group; they were able to identify, and then use in the development of campaign themes, 13 distinct demographic subgroups of women voters.

1984: Symbolism and Substance

Republicans were prepared to address women's concerns in 1984. The Congressional Campaign Committee briefed its candidates on the demographic realities of family life in America—on the fact, for example, that what used to be considered the typical American family of four, with a housewife taking care of two children at home, was no longer typical. In order to narrow the gender gap, the Republicans targeted three subgroups of women: young, single working women; middle-aged, married working women; and elderly or widowed women. Their basic strategy was to sell the Republican economic program as a success. By stressing that the economy had turned around and was providing increased opportunities for all—and by committing themselves to preserving social security—the Republicans appealed to women on the basis of their economic interests, quite apart from their identities as women. This approach was pursued through campaign advertise-

"... the women's vote is an issue vote; it will not surface unless the candidates in a race discuss the issues and make their differences understood."

ments built around the theme "Vote Republican for a Better Future" and designed to address the economic concerns of the specially targeted subgroups of women.

Democrats adopted what amounted to an approach/avoidance strategy toward the women's vote. At first they took a calculated risk by nominating Geraldine Ferraro to be the nation's first woman vice presidential candidate on a major party's ticket. By so doing, the Democrats hoped to establish themselves as the party of women's concerns, much as the nomination of Al Smith had decades earlier helped to draw Catholic voters into the Democratic coalition. With Ferraro on the ticket, the Democrats might reasonably have been expected to focus on issues of particular concern to women, such as day care, economic equity, and arms control. However, the party and its campaign emphasized the symbol and not the substance. The Democrats apparently felt that the Ferraro nomination in and of itself would suffice to crystallize the women's vote. After the nomination, according to Democratic pollster Dotty Lynch, the Mondale strategists focused on issues of deficits and a strong defense in order to garner support among white male ethnics.

The results of the 1984 election make it clear that the women's vote cannot be captured simply by nominating women candidates. It is an issue vote and can be triggered only by policy discussions that incorporate women's perspectives. By not focusing on the substantive concerns of women, the Democrats made it easier for the Republican message to draw off women's votes.

Still, gender differences on issues were much evidence in 1984. Thus, the Harris poll found that more women than men expressed a reluctance to support President Reagan because they disagreed with his positions on air and water pollution (42 percent compared to 34 percent), the ERA (39 percent versus 28 percent), and the nuclear freeze (42 percent as against 31 percent). Men were more likely to vote against Mondale because of his stand on federal spending (45 percent of men, 36 percent of women) and his New Deal values (43 percent and 34 percent respectively).

Women were substantially less willing than men to forsake the fundamentals of the New Deal. Toward the end of the 1984 campaign, a CBS News/*New York Times* survey found that women were more likely to cite fairness to the poor as an important element in their voting decisions (23 percent versus 16 percent) and more likely to urge increased spending on programs for the poor (43 percent versus 38 percent). More men than women said that the economy had improved (62 percent to 52 percent), while more women than men expressed concern that the future of the next generation might be compromised by current economic tradeoffs (51 percent to 40 percent). When asked to name the most important economic problem, 39 percent of the men, but only 25 percent of the women, picked the deficit; 39 percent of the women, as compared to 30 percent of the men, singled out unemployment.

Gender differences on foreign policy issues also persisted. Men more often cited a need for a stronger defense as an important determinant of their votes (31 percent to 20 percent for women), while women more

"The results of the 1984 election make it clear that the women's vote cannot be captured simply by nominating women candidates."

often cited arms control (31 percent to 26 percent). A higher proportion of men than women (49 percent to 37 percent) felt that American foreign policy was better under the Reagan administration than under its predecessor. Women, in turn, were more likely to be concerned that the Star Wars initiative would speed up the arms race (53 percent to 43 percent).

It was foreordained that the Democrats would lose the 1984 election. The economy had improved, the nation was at peace, and Ronald Reagan was an extremely popular president. When retrospective judgments of an administration's performance are highly favorable, a challenger needs to run a prospective campaign offering clearly delineated alternatives for the future that will convince the public of the need for change. Walter Mondale took the public's support of New Deal policies for granted. His campaign did not recognize that the public had moved away from a service-oriented view of government, and it failed to convince voters that the Democrats had a better plan for the future than the Republicans offered.

The significance of the women's vote, however, goes beyond this election. The gender gap reflects differences between men and women in their perceptions of what is best for the nation in the short term and over the long run. Women are less likely than men to support a continuation of current economic policies or to favor increases in defense spending at the expense of social programs. They view the need to protect the environment as being more important than the need to accelerate energy production. While these differences are ones of degree, men and women do have different conceptions of what constitutes a "safety net" for the public and the planet. The clear and continuing contrasts between the priorities and preferences of men and women will continue to force politicians to pay special attention to—and to be accountable to—the female electorate.

The Press and the Election

EVERY FOUR YEARS, the press scrutinizes another presidential campaign—and then its coverage is in turn scrutinized (and second-guessed) by politicians, the public, and the press itself. In January, the Review assembled a group of experts on and of the media, all of them veterans of several presidential campaigns and postmortems, to discuss the press's role in the 1984 election. The participants were:

Jeff Greenfield, a media and political analyst for ABC News and syndicated columnist. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Real Campaign: How the Media Missed the Story of the 1980 Campaign and Television: The First Fifty Years*.

William A. Henry III, associate editor of *Time* magazine. For his work at the *Boston Globe*, Henry won the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for criticism. His book *Visions for America: How We Saw the 1984 Election* will be published later this year.

Stephen Hess, senior fellow in the Governmental Studies program at Brookings. Hess, who moderated the discussion, is the author of *The Presidential Campaign*, *The Washington Reporters*, and, most recently, *The Government/Press Connection*.

Albert R. Hunt, Washington bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*. He is a regular participant on the PBS program "Washington Week in Review" and political analyst on "The CBS Morning News."

What follows is an edited transcript of the conversation.

The Power of the Press

Hess: Our mandate is to discuss the press's treatment of, and involvement in, the 1984 presidential campaign. We have the advantage of knowing what critics before us have said, and we can critique the critics, if you will. So let me start with a quotation from Tom Shales of *The Washington Post*. He writes:

This was the year we finally just sat back and let TV news pick our leaders for us. (Oh, wouldn't Orwell have a shudder!) Roger Mudd eliminated Gary Hart from the Democratic race by making him seem ridiculous on TV



From left to right: Stephen Hess, Albert R. Hunt, Jeff Greenfield, and William A. Henry III.

and threw the nomination to Mondale. Then, when it looked like even Mondale might have a wisp of a chance, in two or three states anyway, Edwin Newman came to Ronald Reagan's rescue by interrupting the president's loopy time-capsule soliloquy in the very nick of time.

Jeff, is Mr. Shales right or wrong?

Greenfield: He's wrong. I respect Tom Shales a great deal. He's one of my favorite television writers. But on this subject, I think he's absolutely dead wrong. What he says reflects the same kind of look through the wrong end of the telescope that has afflicted the way most people view the media's role in campaigns.

We'll go into more of this later, but I'll just put one thing on the table: Run this whole campaign — with all the flubs, all the raised eyebrows, all the media events — put in a 10.5 percent unemployment rate, and you're not going to get the same campaign.

Hunt: I hate to be so agreeable, but Jeff's absolutely right. I assume Tom was writing satire. Roger Mudd did not defeat Gary Hart; Gary Hart defeated Gary Hart. The press did not create Walter Mondale's so-called special interest problem; Walter Mondale created it. And the press did not create an era of good feeling about Ronald Reagan; Ronald Reagan and four years of the Reagan administration created that. The notion that the press somehow manipulated this election is just nonsense.

Hess: Bill Henry, are we all in agreement?

Henry: Yes, I regret concurring so fully. I amend Al to say that Gary Hart faded because he proved not to be Gary Hart. He emerged as somebody who was bold

and daring and looking toward the future. Then, at every point where the tide might have turned, he proved craven and dithering beyond even the image of Adlai Stevenson. The press translated the public's expectation of Hart at first, and then proceeded to translate Hart as it found him.

I think if one is to fault the press in general, it is for the customary sin of overreliance on conventional expectations. But the only people victimized by that were the journalists themselves, including all of those eminent buffoons who announced that Walter Mondale was an absolute mortal lock in New Hampshire — and the number of people who don't fit into that category is small enough to fit in a telephone booth. The public went ahead and acted as it chose to at every point in the process.

Journalists are, after all, the marketing directors of their organizations. They are in general passive. They are not opinion-leaders; they are catchers of what is in the wind. Sometimes they're a little ahead of the public, and sometimes they're a little behind it. But it is very, very rare that they are actually shaping opinion or creating ideas; they merely coalesce what is inchoate.

The Predilections of the Press

Hess: Another sort of criticism of the press comes from Irving Kristol, who, in a *Wall Street Journal* column about election coverage, refers to "the liberal bias of the media, which is so pervasive that most journalists are blandly convinced it is prescribed by journalistic ethics itself." Did we in fact see this election, as he and some other observers have suggested, through a liberal prism?

Hunt: I'm always astounded by the logic of those critics. They say, first, that the media are all-powerful, and, second, that the media are decidedly liberal — and they conclude that the media affect national policy in a liberal way. Why, then, have we seen this very clear turn to the right over the last ten years?

I think that the press has a bias towards the passion of the moment, a bias towards the conventional wisdom, a bias toward horse races. But I don't think we have much of an ideological bias.

Henry: There's also a bias towards deferring to those in power. Journalists as a group, with some exceptions, tend to be attracted to the business because they want to be part of the process. And they are intrigued by and in some ways deferential to — much as they may see themselves as the equals of, or the buddies of, or even the adversaries of — those in the process. But they are preoccupied with the inner workings, with the power structure, and therefore they wind up unconsciously with a very strong bias towards the status quo. Their notion of being opinion leaders or taking radical steps tends to be radical only within the very rarefied context of the entropy of official Washington.

Greenfield: There's another phenomenon we should address, which is the pattern of turning on the frontrunner or at least raising questions. I think it's more of a tropism than a bias. The press says, "Wait a minute. Who is this guy anyway?" That's what happened to Gary Hart. The day of the New Hampshire

primary, I called Pat Caddell [pollster and key adviser to Hart], because the ABC polls had done a last-minute flip, and I asked him if he was ready for what was coming — what [*Washington Post* columnist] Mark Shields calls the frisk, the inundation of skeptical questions. And he said yes, we've been through this before. Well, the answer was, as Bill indicated, that Gary Hart turned out not to be ready for what I think was frequently an overly hostile, and at times almost snotty, coverage.

If you were to look at the coverage in the 21 days following the New Hampshire primary, I think you would find some incredibly bad journalism about Gary Hart — or if not bad, then kind of pack journalism. Having said that, if you believe the polls, in the space of one week 30 million Americans changed their minds and decided that Hart was going to beat Reagan — and then the press began the frisk. Does Hart really have new ideas? How come he changed his name? How come he changed his age? The networks all did, I think, really unfair pieces making Gary Hart the candidate of the BMW and Aspen condo set. But the point is that the press always treats newly-arrived frontrunners this way.

Hunt: I think that what Jeff says is absolutely right, and it's not contradictory to what we said earlier. In the time between Iowa and New Hampshire, the press helped make Gary Hart. On the day following Iowa, the polls the Glenn people were doing in New Hampshire showed a positively dramatic shift from before the evening news programs to after them. In one poll, Gary Hart climbed 15 points and John Glenn slipped 9 points. And I think that for six or seven days, the press gave Hart a wonderful ride. Afterwards, though, the press was much meaner and in some ways more unfair to Hart than it should have been. I believe that those two stretches of time sort of balanced out.

Henry: Two further addenda, if I may. First, while not disagreeing with you, Al, I'm inclined to think that the press gave Gary Hart a great ride only in the sense that they communicated to the electorate in New Hampshire that there was another option. The voters were clearly disaffected from Glenn and less than totally enthusiastic about Mondale. And the great publicity that Gary Hart got was simply the affirmation that, yes, there was a third viable candidate — and, in an abreaction of disgust, people latched onto him. Second, the question of "who is this guy?" is something the press does raise, but it is also a question that voters have on their own minds.

Greenfield: If there is a general-election equivalent to the bias against frontrunners during the primaries, it is a fascination with the question of who screwed up. Mondale goes to New York the opening day of the campaign on Labor Day and brilliantly decides to march down Fifth Avenue at 9 o'clock in the morning, and we are told that his campaign is off to a rocky start. The president appears in Louisville not to be in control of himself, and we get an astonishing nine days of coverage — is the guy too old, is he senile, is there a real horse race? — all of which turns out to have had at most a marginal impact.

Hunt: That's right. The general election bias — because

"Did we in fact see this election ... through a liberal prism?"

—STEPHEN HESS



you don't have the frontrunner, you don't have so many people emerging — is the equivalent of a death watch, a stumble watch, a gaffe watch.

Hess: But isn't there also, on the press's side, a sort of institutional role in keeping the pot stirring?

Hunt: There is a desire to do that, but the fact is that the press is incapable of doing it when there is a resourceful incumbent. A resourceful incumbent is going to dominate the press every time, and it's basically because — as the Michael Deavers of the world know — if you give television producers great pictures, that will overwhelm their desire to make the contest a horse race. Nixon proved it in '72, and I think Ford proved it in '76, and Reagan proved it again in '84. In the last few elections, the only incumbent who was not resourceful was Jimmy Carter in '80, and he paid the price.

Henry: I think there is also a tendency among journalists, because they put so much emphasis on the predictive, horse race aspect of their coverage, not to want to be wrong. And if you decide before Labor Day, as virtually every major news organization in America did, that the election is over — well, that nine days of post-debate coverage was especially extraordinary because until then nobody had really been bothering to cover the race except in a routine, pro forma way. In 1972, there was the same sort of listless, lackluster approach on the part of senior management in news organizations, because what is the point of making a big fuss over a foreordained event?

The Lure of the Horse Race

Hess: A common complaint, from politicians as well as commentators, is that the coverage of presidential campaigns is superficial. For example, Walter Mondale, in a press conference after his defeat, said that American politics is "losing the depth that tough problems require

to be discussed. And more and more, it's that 20-second snip, the angle, the shtick. . . ." And Robert Kuttner, writing in the *Washington Journalism Review*, contends that in 1984 the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* "fell into the usual pattern of obsessively running ephemeral dope stories on the campaign." Are these comments warranted?

Henry: Are the candidates any less insubstantial? I can think of only one political speech I witnessed last year by any of the major candidates that really seemed to me to deal with great matters of substance, and that was Reagan's largely ignored speech at the United Nations, which I thought was also his finest hour in terms of delivery, clarity, and so on. The candidates — Mondale in particular, for all of his complaints — were doing little more than sloganeering. Their speeches were directed toward the reaffirmation of preexisting assumptions in the minds of their hearers, not toward stimulating anybody to think. I grant you that the journalists don't seem to have done a great deal more than that in many instances, but the candidates were in no position to criticize.

Hunt: Bill, I think you're letting us off a little bit too easily, because we may encourage that phenomenon. One of the press's deficiencies is that we do have this obsession with the horse race in the early stages. Even the best journalists, even the David Broders, get caught in that. *Newsweek* magazine said the day before the New Hampshire primary that Mondale had an insurmountable lead in New Hampshire. The *New York Times*, in the classic faux pas of the election, said in a front-page piece the day of the New Hampshire primary that Walter Mondale had the biggest lead of any candidate in history.

Henry: And worse, two days later came back with a piece essentially explaining why the people of New Hampshire were wrong.

Hunt: Those pieces really don't threaten to topple the republic. The problem is that they drain energy and resources. We don't focus on what Fritz Hollings has to say because we've decided he's not in the horse race. That's the danger in this process; we get so caught up in the predictions that we don't do enough of the other things that we could do a little bit better.

Another point that goes hand in hand with this: We in the press are prisoners of the polls. I don't have any great solution — you're not going to ban polls, nor should you, and they can be very, very useful — but the press's agenda is set by what a bunch of numbers is showing. And we don't understand polls as well as we should. I think those are legitimate criticisms.

Greenfield: On the question of the horse race versus the issues, if you compare coverage over, say, the last three elections, I think there was a slight — and I emphasize slight — improvement in '84. Most major publications were aware enough of this criticism that they tried to respond. The *Times*, as it had done in the past, ran standard stump speeches — which was very useful because most people never hear them. I don't want to embarrass Mr. Hunt by overly praising the *Wall Street Journal*, but it consistently took runs at the numbers behind the assumptions of the candidates — what they intended to do with their budgets and whether that was

realistic, how much Walter Mondale's promises were really worth.

Even television. When we move away from the balloons and 90-second dramas that are the core of coverage, all of the networks tried, each in its own way, to take a step back and look at some of the deeper problems. There are all kinds of specifics. They range from Ken Bode's piece out of Connecticut [for NBC] showing that white males were nowhere to be found in the Mondale campaign, which was remarkably prescient, to the interviews that each network did with all of the primary candidates. There was some effort—I don't want to overstate it, I don't want to say it negates the criticism—there was some effort to do it differently.

No News is No News

Hess: It's interesting to hear your comments on what the press has been doing wrong—the overreliance on polls, the overemphasis on the horse race, and so on. But what in fact should the role of the press be? On the one hand, Elie Abel [head of the Stanford University communications department and former NBC and *New York Times* correspondent] has criticized network reporters for not challenging the substantive claims made in campaign speeches this past year. On the other hand, Tom Wicker [of the *Times*] recently had this to say: "The best the reader can expect from the daily metropolitan newspaper is that it give a reasonably complete sense of what in fact happened yesterday, what was actually said . . . [T]o expect more than that, to expect a newspaper to provide its readers with an in-depth understanding of many serious subjects in public affairs, is unfair." Well, what should you be doing? What does the public have a right to expect from you?

Hunt: We're halfway between Tom's two extremes, I think. I guess it was Philip Graham [former publisher of *The Washington Post*] who said that newspapers are at their best a first rough draft of history. That's at our best, and I think we can aim for that.

I want to focus on the point Mr. Abel made. I think there's television and there's television. If you look at the pieces that Ken Bode did for the *Today* show, if you look at the pieces that Jeff Greenfield did on *Nightline*, if you look at *MacNeil/Lehrer*—I confess a conflict of interest, because my wife is on *MacNeil/Lehrer*—there was some very serious analysis and discussion of this campaign. Occasionally some showed up on the nightly news. The problem with television is that when five million people are watching it, they are very, very good—but when 15 million start watching it, they are very, very superficial.

Another thing that bothered me about television coverage of the general election was their lack of discipline, their unwillingness to say there isn't a Reagan or Mondale story today. Every single night, they had to do the two minutes, rather than saying we won't do it Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, because they didn't make news—the balloons are marvelous and Michael Deaver got the best camera angles we've ever seen in our lives, but we don't have to cover that, because there is something more serious to talk about. And then on Friday, instead of having two minutes on each of the



"The problem with television is that when five million people are watching it, they are very, very good—but when 15 million start watching it, they are very, very superficial."

—ALBERT R. HUNT

three preceding days, spending five minutes on what is really going on. Now television is willing to do that on *Nightline*, they're willing to do that on *MacNeil/Lehrer*, they're willing to do it on morning news programs—but they're unwilling to do it where it counts the most: on the evening news shows.

Greenfield: After each election, there is always some prominent television figure who says that one of these days we're going to have the guts to say on the evening news that candidate Smith or Jones went to Des Moines yesterday and didn't do a thing. Part of the resistance to that is a matter of pure logistics. When you send a crew and correspondent out at several thousand dollars a day, you don't want them to come back and say, "I've got nothing for you, chief."

Henry: My view is that newspapers—with the exception of your own, Al—are not much different. If you look at the *New York Times* or the *Boston Globe* or any other daily newspaper obsessed with politics, it doesn't matter what day in the general election campaign it is—there will be not one, but four or five stories relating to each side. And many of them are strictly replicative of the candidates' schedules. Do you need to know (a) that the candidate went to a shopping center and (b) what forgettable midwestern city it was in? Clearly not.

Hunt: Absolutely. I think that when you talk about print, the problem is that readers are fairly busy people. They don't have time to spend an hour and a half a day reading newspapers. During the general election campaign or a particularly hot time in the primary season, papers that like politics and take themselves seriously may be running 15, 16, 17 articles a day. I think that may be a disservice.

Henry: But there is a very good reason for it, and that is the same thing that affects the networks. Nothing gets people so crazy in this country as politics, because people attach to candidates, often wholly inappropri-

ately and based on willful ignorance of who these candidates really are, all of their dreams and projections about an ideal world — which usually turns out to be a world populated with people like whatever individual is doing the dreaming. And so they attach themselves to candidates with a kind of vehemence that they don't have even for their professional football teams. And if they open the paper and there isn't a story about their candidate, especially if there is a story about the other candidate, then they're driven into this frenzy of belief that there is some sort of conspiracy at work in the news organization to undermine their candidate — and the angry calls come in by the dozens, if not the hundreds. Editors, who are probably no more self-destructive than the norm, figure that they are better off doing this kind of blanket, routine, place-holder coverage, whatever else they may do, in order to stave off those accusations. Nor do they wish to be accused by the chairmen of the parties or by the candidates themselves of the bias of omission.

Boundaries

Hess: We found out a good deal in the course of this campaign about the finances of Geraldine Ferraro's husband, about Jesse Jackson's private remarks, and about the medical histories of the two presidential candidates. Is everything fair game for scrutiny by the press when one runs for high public office? Is there anything that should be considered off-limits?

Greenfield: It would be very hard for me to figure out what the public should be foreclosed from knowing about somebody who is literally asking for the power to obliterate human life. I have a lot of problems with investigative reporting these days—with the arrogance and self-righteousness and, in some cases, hypocrisy of reporters who demand to know about every financial transaction of public officials and who have in their

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—JEFF GREENFIELD



own backgrounds some interesting transactions. Jody Powell, among others, has suggested that perhaps reporters should disclose some of their own financial arrangements, such as to whom we lecture and for what fees.

When it comes to the president and vice president, I just don't know what it is you don't want to know. We often forget that the press and public officials, at least when it comes to these two offices, are not coequal. However powerful Dan Rather or Peter Jennings or Tom Brokaw or Al Hunt is, they do not, as far as I know, have nuclear weapons—although I'm sure the *Wall Street Journal* wouldn't mind acquiring them. So I think it is important if the vice presidential nominee's husband is entwined in questionable finances.

Hunt: I concur. I don't think there is anything that I could think of that really should be off-limits. But there's still a question of how it's handled. For instance, I think that the *New York Post's* headlining a piece about Mrs. Ferraro's father being indicted on a gaming charge when she was seven years old was a bit much. It was a cheap shot. It was unfair journalism.

Henry: I wouldn't criticize even the *Post*, although I think it's clear that the story was played as it was for the overt political reasons of the owner of the newspaper.

Hunt: I'm not sure what happened to my Dad 40 years ago, Bill, so maybe I have a conflict of interest.

Henry: Sure, but the presumption is that the people who shape us, our parents, have a lot to do with values that we have. And Gerry Ferraro had every opportunity to come back and say, as, roughly, she did, "I never knew about that, and I don't think it's relevant." It's not as though she had no chance to respond.

Hunt: If there's a problem here, Steve, it's not that these matters should be off-limits; it's that we have limited resources and space. Query: Do we devote too much time to this kind of inquiry and not enough time to other things?

Henry: I think that those are things that the public has very little other opportunity to come to understand, whereas issues, broadly defined, go on all the time, and people who become presidential nominees have normally been principal actors in issue debates for some time previously. And indeed, as we all know, a large percentage of the electorate is not too interested in those issues anyway.

Second, I think that the public, including those people who are issues mavens, is extremely interested in these questions of character — in part because the president is a sort of poet laureate embodying the best ideals of ourselves, in part because he is entrusted with enormous power, and in part because the ideal in a representative society is that you pick somebody you trust and then you turn your attention back to your wife and your dog and your job and your smaller, more confined world.

Prognoses

Hess: I come out of this discussion with the sense that the future is going to look very much like the present, as the present looked rather much like the past, in

"Journalists, like generals in the French army, are always fighting the last war."

—WILLIAM A. HENRY III



terms of press coverage — that there have been marginal changes and that the changes are for the better. But is this good enough? I also have a sense that you're not terribly dissatisfied with press coverage, that if anything it reflects the state of politics in this country. Tell us: Is the press going to change? How can it change? Should it change?

Henry: Journalists, like generals in the French army, are always fighting the last war. In 1972, they felt that they had failed to smoke Richard Nixon out of the White House, that they had failed to be sufficiently suspicious on Watergate, and so in 1976, Gerald Ford was given quite a going over and was pressured far more than previous incumbents to expose himself. After 1976, journalists felt that they had not given enough of a going over to Jimmy Carter and that the Democrats had wound up with someone who was not their most effective or authentic candidate; therefore, George Bush became the obsessive focus of attention very, very early in the 1980 campaign. In 1980, reporters felt that they had failed to spot the Reagan landslide and its ideological components soon enough — and so by Labor Day, 1984, most of them were taking a ho-hum attitude toward a general election campaign that by traditional standards hadn't even started yet.

What I got out of the aftermath of 1984 is that journalists feel they were slow to pick up on the schismatics — the concerns of white men, the concerns of women, the isolationist impulses of blacks. I think, therefore, that we will probably have an overreaction and over-coverage of those things the next time.

But these are relatively mild correctives. After all, journalists do respond to events, and events are to a considerable extent self-generating. Candidates become real when they raise money or when they attract peo-

ple's affections — those two things are not distinct — and when candidates are real, journalists do respond to them. When events supervene — as did the shooting down of Robert Goodman and Jesse Jackson's going over to get him — journalists report what happens and there are political consequences. They don't make those consequences.

And their news judgments are by and large deferential. The goal of most editors I know, whether in print or broadcasting, is to have as their main stories the topics people are talking about in the better sort of barroom after work.

Greenfield: The predisposition of the three commercial television networks, I believe, is to bite the bullet and back away from the kind of extensive convention coverage that they now see as anachronistic. The problem with that is logistical: If there is any chance of the convention actually deciding something in '88, and there's always a chance, you have to prepare to cover it that way because it takes two months to wire the bloody building. Having spent all that money wiring the building, it is then difficult to say, "We're going to do this in one-minute updates." But if the parties throw up candidates who by March or April are clear nominee-designates, I think you'll probably see — much to the dissatisfaction of journalists, who love conventions because they get to see all their old friends — there will be much restricted coverage.

I also think we will continue to see on the part of television marginal improvements in covering the campaign as something other than a series of 90-second kabuki dramas.

Hunt: Steve, I agree with Bill and Jeff. I think you know far better than we do that changes in any institution tend to be marginal. We will make marginal changes, and I think that they will be for the most part improvements, in 1988.

There is a genuine struggle going on within both parties for the heart and soul of each, and there is a genuine struggle going on in the country as well over which party is going to dominate — and which philosophy is going to dominate — American politics into the next century. So I think it's a fascinating time. We won't have an incumbent up for reelection in 1988, so the challenges are going to be that much greater for our business.

Rather than predict what's going to happen, I would like to express a hope for both the press and television, and that is that we won't have more coverage in 1988. As a matter of fact, I would hope that we'll have slightly less, but that it will be better, more selective. As far as newspapers are concerned, I would hope that we can avoid the kind of insecurity that leads us to feel that we have to do 17 stories a day, that we can put things in better perspective for the readers. And when it comes to television, I would hope that the evening news programs that attract the huge audiences learn a little bit from the *Nightlines* and the *MacNeil/Lehrers* and try to do fewer stories, but better stories.

I don't know that all this is going to happen. But there are enough bright people in the business so that we know it should happen. I think there's a chance that it will.

Program for New Members of Congress

FROM JUNE 4 to 8, 1985, the Brookings Institution co-sponsored—with the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) and the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress—a special seminar for newly elected members of Congress. The seminar was held in Williamsburg, Virginia; financial support was provided by the Henry Luce Foundation. The 23 new senators and representatives in attendance heard from dozens of speakers, including executive branch officials, veteran members of Congress, scholars, and journalists. Among the topics covered were medicare and other social programs; national security policy and the defense budget; the outlook for the U.S. economy; and options for tax policy.

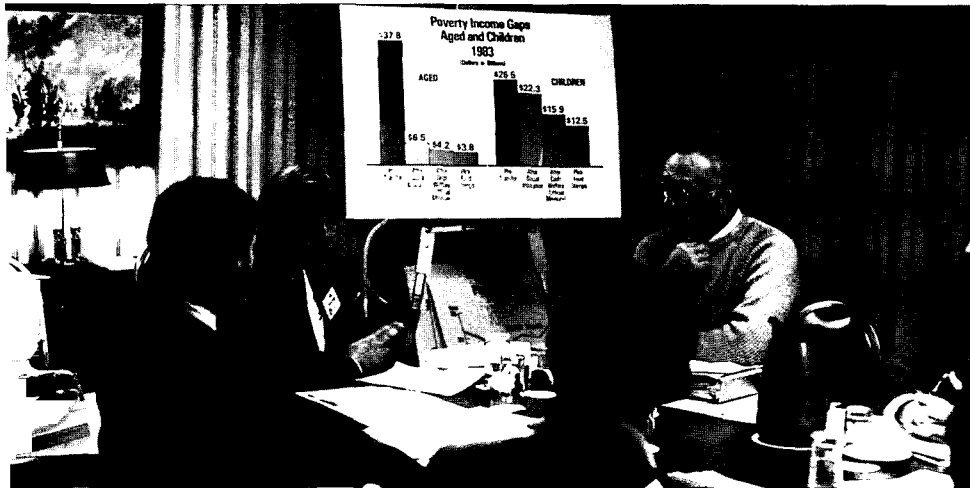
Right: Representative David S. Monson (R-Utah); Representative John G. Rowland (R-Conn.); Paul Volcker, chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; Representative Richard D. McIntyre (R-Ind.); Representative Joe Barton (R-Tex.); and Representative John R. Miller (R-Wash.).



Below: Miller, his wife June, and Representative Albert Bustamante (D-Tex.).

Below Right: Bruce MacLaury, president of the Brookings Institution; Representative Herbert H. Bateman (R-Va.); and Eric A. Hanushek, deputy director of the Congressional Budget Office.





Left: Gary Burtless, senior fellow in the Brookings Economics Studies program; John Weicher, fellow in public policy research at AEI; Barton (with back to camera); Representative Vincente Blaz (R-Guam); and Representative Fred J. Eckert (R-N.Y.).

Below Left: Representative Thomas J. Manton (D-N.Y.); Representative James T. Kolbe (R-Ariz.); and Representative Paul B. Henry (R-Mich.).

Below: Kolbe; Marvin Esch, director of seminars and programs at AEI; Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, vice chairman of Kissinger Associates, Inc.; and Senator Albert Gore, Jr. (D-Tenn.).



American Economic Association Presidencies

AT THE DECEMBER, 1984, meeting of the American Economic Association (AEA), Charles L. Schultze, senior fellow in the Economic Studies program at Brookings, stepped down as president of the organization at the end of his one-year term. Schultze's presidential address to the meeting was entitled "The Macroeconomic Costs of Microeconomic Efficiency."

Alice M. Rivlin, director of the Economic Studies program, is now the president-elect of the AEA. When she takes office in December, 1985, at the beginning of the AEA's centennial year, she will be the first woman president of the association.



Charles L. Schultze

Alice M. Rivlin

Taxes: Progressively Less Progressive

ACCORDING TO a new study by Joseph A. Pechman on the distribution of federal, state, and local taxes, the tax system has become somewhat less progressive in the last two decades. In *Who Paid the Taxes, 1966-85?*, Pechman, a senior fellow in the Brookings Economic Studies program, presents estimates based on a unique series of microdata files that were developed by merging information from the annual current population surveys of the U.S. Bureau of the Census with tax return samples from the Internal Revenue Service. He calculates tax burdens on the basis of eight sets of incidence assumptions that span the range of expert opinion. Among his findings:

—The decline in the overall progressivity of the tax system is due to a decrease in the relative significance of the federal corporation income tax and local property taxes and an increase in the revenue-production role of the social security payroll tax. The pattern of reduced progressivity obtains whether it is assumed that the corporation income tax is borne by owners of capital or that it is partly shifted to consumers, he adds.

—The progressivity of federal taxes declined between 1966 and 1985, while the regressivity of state and local taxes remained roughly constant.

—The impact of taxes on the distribution of income is small, but the system of transfer payments (benefits paid by such programs as social security, unemployment compensation, food stamps, and medicare) is highly progressive and has a substantial equalizing effect on the distribution of income.

—Taxes on capital income were heavier than those on labor income in 1966, but as a result of the reductions in the corporation income and property taxes, the tax burden on labor income will be higher in 1985.

—In 1980, under the most progressive assumptions, effective tax rates for the tax system as a whole ran from about 20 percent at the lowest end of the income scale to 27 percent at the top. In 1985, effective tax rates under these assumptions are expected to run from 22 percent to 25 percent.

—Under the least progressive assumptions, effective tax rates in 1980 dropped from 29 percent at the lowest end of the distribution to about 25 percent in the second decile and remained at that level until they declined to 22 percent in the top percentile. In 1985, the effective tax rates under these assumptions will range from 28 percent at the low end to 21 percent at the top end.

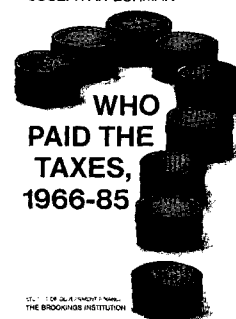
—The distribution of income before taxes was virtually the same in 1985 as in 1966. As a result of the decline in the progressivity of the tax system, the distribution of income after taxes is more unequal today. "Between 1966 and 1985," Pechman writes, "tax burdens increased in the lower part of the income scale, declined sharply at the top, and remained roughly the same or rose slightly in between."

He concludes: "The U.S. tax system is either moderately progressive or slightly regressive, depending on the incidence assumptions for the major taxes. If the corporation income tax and the property tax are assumed to be borne by capital, the very rich pay higher average effective tax rates than does the average family."

Who Paid the Taxes, 1966-85?

By Joseph A. Pechman
\$8.95 paper; \$22.95 cloth.

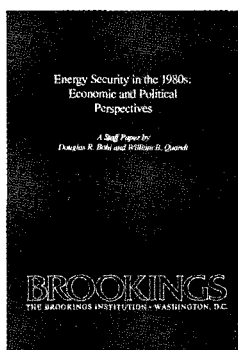
JOSEPH A. PECHMAN



The New World Energy Market

Energy Security in the 1980s: Economic and Political Perspectives

By Douglas R. Bohi and
William B. Quandt
\$6.95 paper.



ACCORDING TO Douglas R. Bohi and William B. Quandt, energy markets in the 1980s will work more efficiently than they did in the 1970s, with less risk of large and enduring price shocks. They caution that political developments, especially in the Middle East, could lead to disruptions of oil supplies and increases in prices. However, once the disruptions end, consumers can expect prices to decline.

In *Energy Security in the 1980s: Economic and Political Perspectives*, Bohi and Quandt emphasize that diplomacy, military preparedness, and public policy still have important roles to play in reducing the risk of future energy crises. But Bohi, a senior fellow at Resources for the Future, and Quandt, a senior fellow in the Brookings Foreign Policy Studies program, find that primarily because of the restructuring of the international petroleum market, the energy security problem of the 1980s will differ significantly from that of the 1970s.

Special market conditions in the 1970s, aided by two crises in the Middle East—the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 and the Iranian revolution in 1978-79—allowed individual members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to gain control over oil company operations in their own countries and to influence market prices through their decisions on output and the development of reserves. But, the authors say, recent changes in the energy market have weakened OPEC's power.

On the demand side, in part because of the increased price of oil in the 1970s, economic growth in industrial countries—and, with it, energy demand—began to subside. Incentives were created to conserve fuel, and energy buyers began to switch from oil to other fuels.

On the supply side, oil development and exploration outside OPEC were stimulated. Non-OPEC countries now account for a rising share of energy production. Moreover, the distribution process has come to rely more on spot-market transactions than on the long-term contracts that were the norm in the 1970s. Thus, Bohi and Quandt find that the market has become more competitive.

"The view commonly held in the 1970s, that supply shocks and higher oil prices always benefit oil-exporting nations at the expense of oil-importing nations, is no longer widely believed," they write. "Now both groups of countries stand to lose from market instability."

The market is less susceptible to disruption than it was in the past decade, they add. "The international oil market has adapted to the traumas of the 1970s with a more flexible system of conducting transactions, more diversity in the distribution of oil production, and more efficiency in oil consumption."

But Bohi and Quandt do not discount the possibility that energy markets could be disrupted by political conflicts—such as war in the Persian Gulf, instability in Saudi Arabia, or an intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In contrast to the disruptions of the 1970s, those in the 1980s need not produce large and persistent price increases, they maintain.

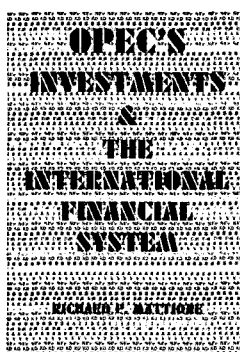
The best policy for energy security, they indicate, is one that reinforces the existing power balance. "This may be helped by building on the commonality of political and economic interests between Western industrialized countries and various Middle Eastern states with the goal of enhancing stability in the critical Gulf region." Diplomacy, backed by credible force, will be the essential ingredient of American energy security in the late 1980s, they conclude.

The Capital of OPEC

OPEC's Investments and the International Financial System

By Richard P. Mattione

\$9.95 paper; \$26.95 cloth.



OPEC MEMBERS built up massive assets after the oil price increases in late 1973. However, a new study by Richard P. Mattione finds that "the current oil market glut has largely removed fears that ever-increasing foreign investments by OPEC members would pose a serious threat to the West."

In *OPEC's Investments and the International Financial System*, Mattione, formerly a research associate in the Brookings Foreign Policy Studies program, examines the investment strategies of OPEC members. He argues that over the past decade economic factors have dominated political ones in OPEC's investment strategies, "a situation likely to continue for the rest of the 1980s."

For all 13 OPEC nations, he writes, "oil and development policies set the bounds within which financial strategies operate." Although anxieties about OPEC's power have diminished recently, Mattione says, the investment strategies of individual OPEC members continue to be of interest because of the size of their holdings, the interactions between investment strategies and decisions on oil policy, and concerns about OPEC investments in the energy and financial industries.

He examines the size and distribution of OPEC's investments, their effects on the international financial system, and the motivations behind their investment strategies. Mattione points out that about 90 percent of the OPEC nations' investments have been identified. The United States remains the largest single national market in which these assets are invested, with \$76.9 billion invested here between 1974 and 1983. The Eurobanking market as a whole accounted for \$79.7 billion over that decade; identified OPEC investments totaled \$383.4 billion.

The OPEC nations' investments have not posed, nor are they likely to pose, a threat to the international financial system, Mattione says. He finds that the investments are often relatively small when compared to the size of the markets to which they have been directed—for example, the market for U.S. government securities.

Moreover, Mattione observes, various mechanisms exist in industrial countries and international markets that reduce the risks of an OPEC-induced financial shock: "The diversification of investments, the limits on how much can be quickly moved, the structure of financial markets themselves, and central bank procedures combine to limit the threat." He notes also that Western nations have some reverse leverage on OPEC because those OPEC members with the largest financial claims are most dependent on Western markets for maintaining the value of the investments. "The freeze of Iranian assets," he writes, "has made the reverse leverage of the United States more credible."

Mattione, who is now an international economist at Morgan Guaranty Trust Co. of New York, anticipates no major changes in the financial strategies of OPEC members, despite a decline in the foreign assets of OPEC members. If the oil market should once again strengthen significantly, he expects only a modest restoration of surpluses—and a jump in domestic spending by OPEC nations.



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